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# THE BUFFALO BILL



A WEEKLY PUBLICATION **STORIES** DEVOTED TO BORDER LIFE

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## Buffalo Bill's Crow Scouts;

OR,

## Pawnee Bill and the Absarokes.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE TRAIL RIDERS.

"Vell, py Shiminy Grismus! Dere iss somepody else going along der drail mit horses. I t'ought I vas der only feller aroundt. Ach, himmelblitzen! Can I belief my eyes, yas, no? Vone iss a laty! Yah, so helup me, vone oof dose people iss a laty! Almost you could knock me down mit some feders, dot I see a laty in der Inchun gountry. Vell, vell!"

A Dutchman, bestriding a long-eared, ornery-appearing ~~male~~, was moving northward along a trail. He was riding out of the southeast.

Out of the south, perhaps a quarter of a mile away from him, two other riders could be seen, also headed north. These two were proceeding in single file. Although the distance rendered accurate observation impossible, yet it was no great trick for the Dutchman to make out that one of the distant riders was a woman.

From the south and from the southeast ran a couple of trails. They were bearing toward each other, and would presently unite into the one trail that led on to Fort Benton, on the Upper Missouri. In traversing their separate trails, the Dutchman and the other two travelers angled rapidly toward each other.

The woman's companion, the Dutchman was presently able to discover, was a tall man in buckskins. His face was heavily bearded, and from under his coonskin cap

fell a profusion of long, black, stringy hair. From a belt that encircled his thighs sagged a holster with a heavy revolver, and across the withers of his horse lay a long-barreled rifle.

The man's horse was a shaggy, mongrel-bred animal, but big and strong as befitted the steed of such a heavy warrior. It carried no saddle, but a skin of the mountain lion for a riding blanket; and the bridle was of braided rawhide, with a spade bit, big silver conchas under the horse's ears, and buckskin reins that were knotted throughout their length in order to give the hands a firm hold.

This product of the frontier was evidently a guide.

Behind him came the woman, a young woman, and pretty. She bore indelibly the stamp of the East, for her clothing was of a fine blue cloth and her skirts constructed for riding astride, man fashion. Back of her saddle cantle were two saddlebags. She rode a gray horse, and she rode well.

These two gave as much curious attention to the Dutchman as the Dutchman gave to them. When they finally reached the place where the two trails came together, the Dutchman removed his cap, gave it a flourish, and bowed in the lady's direction.

"How you vas?" he bubbled, with a grin that could have been tied behind his ears. "Meppeso you go by Fort Penton, huh?"



"Thet's ther way we're er-goin'," answered the man, his look rife with frank distrust.

"Dot's me, all der same," went on the Dutchman. "Meppeso ve drafel togedder?"

"Who aire ye?" demanded the man in buckskins.

"Dot's rightt. Indroductions fairst, den ve know more as ve can guess, vich iss pedder for eferypody. I peen der Paron von Schnitzenhauser, mit Villum for der front name, und I haf der bleasure to be der bard oof Puf-falo Pill, und Vild Pill, und Pawnee Pill, und olt Nomat, und Leedle Cayuse, oof whom you haf heardt, und mep-peso oof me. Ad your serfice, gentleman und laty!"

With that, the baron once more doubled himself over the saddle horn.

A flicker, as of remembrance, ran through the lady's face; and the man's countenance cleared of suspicion as though by magic.

"The baron!" exclaimed the girl, in a flutelike voice that gave the baron a thrill. "Why, I have heard about you, and about your brave companions."

"Dot iss a habbiness!" smirked the baron.

"Hyar, too," said the man. "I'm Jerson, Newt Jerson, from Custer, guide, trapper, an' scout fer ther milingtary forces in these parts. Ther lady is Miss Mary Holcomb. She's got a brother at Benton, Cap'n Holcomb. I'm showin' her ther way ter ther Missouri. Nick Nomad is er pertic'ler friend o' mine. Him an' me's trapped all up an' down ther Platte. Put 'er thar, friend!"

Newt Jerson reached out a hamlike fist, and he and the baron greeted each other heartily.

"Dere iss Inchuns loose," said the baron, "und it iss goot dot ve drafel togedder. I am filled mit vonders dot a laty has der nerf to drafel between Custer und Penton mit der hostile ret fellers loose in der gountry."

"Why," returned the girl, as the journey was resumed, "we heard at Custer that the hostile Sioux had all been put to flight, and that there was now nothing to be feared. Your friends, baron, Buffalo Bill and his comrades, have quelled the rebellion."

"Iss dot so!" rumbled the baron, delighted. "I hatn't heard someding aboutt dot. Aber I bed you somet'ing for nodding dot if repellions iss to be quelled, den my bards iss der fellers to quell it. You see, I come from der Yellowstone, und pefore I reach der Yellowstone I come from avay south in Arizona. I know leedle aboutt vat has been going on in dis part oof der gountry."

"You haven't been with yer pards fer some sort of er while, then?" asked Newt Jerson.

"It iss a long sort oof a vile, Cherson."

"Waal, they've shore been doin' things. Fust off, they capter a white renegade named Blix, an' next off they lays by ther heels a feller as was called Masta Shella, another low-down white as was stirrin' up ther reds ter make trouble. Now, we heerd down ter Custer thet thar ain't nothin' more ter be feared, so me an' Miss Holcomb we started out. She's in a hurry ter git ter Benton."

"I haf took shances meinseluf ven I vas in a hurry to ged some blaces," observed the baron. "Your brudder is vanting you, meppe?" and he directed a look at Miss Holcomb.

The young lady blushed rosily.

"Yes," she replied, "I am very anxious to see my brother."

Newt Jerson looked at the baron and winked with his

off eye. The wink was significant, but the baron could not understand the significance.

"Dot iss fine," said the baron pleasantly, "ven a feller has his sisder come from avay off to see him vere he iss in der Inchun gountry. I don't got some sisters meinseluf," he added glumly, "so nopody comes from avay off to see me."

"I thort ye allers trailed along with ther Bills?" said Jerson.

It was now the baron's turn to flush and look uncomfortable.

"Vonce in a vile," he answered, "I take some foolish streaks und go off py meinseluf."

"Didn't git mad at yer pards fer anythin', did ye?" inquired Jerson.

"Nefer!" cried the baron. "I don'd get mad at dose fellers."

"Then I opine it was bizness thet kept ye in Arizony?"

"Yah, so, foolish pitzness."

The baron jerked a red cotton handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his perspiring face.

"A laty vas at der pottom oof it," went on the baron.

Jerson chuckled in his hairy throat. Miss Holcomb turned to cast an amused glance at the embarrassed baron.

"She vas peautiful," breathed the baron, rolling up his eyes, "ach, so peautiful as I can't tell, mit teet' like der leedle pearls, und eyes like der leedle shtars, und lips so ret as der sumach in der summer time. I t'ink meppe ven I see dot leedle gal dot I vould like to ged marrit und seddle down. Aber I fool avay my time."

"That is too bad!" murmured Miss Holcomb.

"It iss vorse as dot, laty," gloomed the baron. "Der leedle peach vat I talk aboutt vas a biscuit shooder, aber a laty iss a laty, ad a lunch gounter as vell as in a palace. *Nicht wahr?*"

"Always," returned Miss Holcomb.

"T'ank you for dose peautiful vords," dribbled the baron. "I haf been hurt in my feelings aboutt dot Arizona laty. Meppe I vill ged ofer it, und meppe nod. Ve shall see vat ve shall see, ven der time comes."

"Did—did she die?" asked Miss Holcomb.

"Vorse as dot! She marrit der odder feller."

Newt Jerson haw-hawed until he nearly fell off his horse. The baron's eyes flashed, and he reached for a revolver.

"No, no!" cried Miss Holcomb, stretching out a restraining hand; "Mr. Jerson didn't mean to make fun of you, baron."

"Shore not," said Jerson. "I wouldn't go an' put up a holler on ercount of er moharrie as throwed me down. Ye're drorin' er purty long face fer sich a piece o' folderol, baron."

"Vell, it's my folderol, you bed my life," snapped the baron, "und I don'd led some fellers make foolishness oof it. Dere vill be firevorks more as I can tell oof somepody tries to make fun."

"Let it go," grunted Jerson.

For a time they rode on in silence. The trail passed through a rocky gully, flanked on each side by rough banks covered with huge boulders.

The three riders were close to the middle of the gully when the baron aroused himself from his painful reflections and broke the silence.

"It iss always my luck," said he, "to be somevere else



ven my bards haf some oxcidement on. Now, I bed my life, I vill shtick close py dose Pill fellers all der time und ged vat iss coming to me. I vill——"

There came a startling interruption. It was in the nature of a chorus of ear-splitting, demoniacal yells. The baron caught a glimpse of wiry, painted forms flinging themselves into the trail, whooping and shaking many blankets.

All three of the horses were frightened. Toofer, the baron's mule, got up on his hind feet, lost his balance, and fell over backward. The baron missed being crushed only by a hair's breadth. As it was, he was stunned by his fall, and the last thing he heard was a shriek from the girl and a bellow of rage from Newt Jerson.

Then, for a space, night rolled over the baron.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE HANDS OF HOSTILES.

The baron was unconscious for only a few minutes. Although he was fat and awkward in build, he was, nevertheless, as tough as shoe leather. He drifted back to his surroundings and found himself neatly bound with thongs. A painted savage was standing over him, arms folded, and an exultant glare in his eyes.

At the Indian's side stood a man who was evidently a half-breed. The breed was clad in buckskins, but the costume was topped by a slouch hat.

For a time the baron saw only these two, although he could hear sounds which indicated that there were many more of the red men in the immediate vicinity.

"Who you?" asked the half-breed, noticing that the baron had opened his eyes. "I spak de English."

"I peen a bard oof der king oof sgouts," flared the baron, realizing that he had been surprised and taken prisoner. "Puffalo Pill iss my friendt, und oof you know vat iss goot for you, den you vill led me go."

The Indian at the half-breed's side must have understood English himself. A gleam shot into his eyes, and he said something in the Sioux tongue to the half-breed. The latter answered. The Indian, who was evidently a chief, struck his hands together delightedly.

The baron was lying flat on his back, his pinioned wrists under him. He was worried about Toofer, and he rolled over on his side so that he might throw a glance around the gully.

He saw the mule. The animal, a little way down the gully, was in the hands of a half-naked savage.

Across the defile was Miss Holcomb. She was sitting on a boulder, her hands bound at her back, and her feet secured at the ankles. Her head was bowed, but she seemed to be too strong-hearted for tears. On either side of her stood a grim warrior, armed with rifle, lance, bow, and arrows.

Close to where the girl sat on the boulder lay Newt Jerson, flat on the flinty earth as was the baron, and likewise securely bound. The guide's horse and the girl's were held by more savages, close to the mule.

"Py shinks!" muttered the baron. "Eferybody has been gaptured. Vat a foolish pitzness! Hello, dere, Jerson!" he called.

The guide turned his head and looked across at the

baron. The girl also lifted her face and stared in his direction.

"What's troublin' ye?" asked the guide gloomily.

"I t'ought you say dere iss no hosdile Inchuns loose in der gountry," said the baron.

"It's shore a big surprise on me," scowled Jerson. "I never dreamed o' anythin' like this happenin'. An' so clost ter Benton, too! Ther red whelps hev got their nerve right with 'em."

"Why dit der Inchuns——"

The baron did not finish the question. At that moment a moccasined foot struck him on the side of his face, turning his head sharply to one side and smothering his words. It was the chief who had kicked him.

"Make tm quiet," growled the chief.

"Oof I vas loose mit meinseluf," howled the baron, in a rage, "I bed more as a million tollars you would see shtars, und comics, und odder t'ings! Vat a ret fillian I don'd know! I——"

Biff!

Again the moccasined foot smashed against the baron's face.

"Pa-e-has-ka's friend make um keep still!" stormed the chief.

Thereupon the baron bottled up his wrath and awaited developments.

There seemed to be about a dozen in the chief's party, all told. Some of these were leading ponies over the crest of the gully's bank and down into the defile.

The baron, obedient to an order from the chief, was picked up and hustled over to where Jerson was lying. There he was dropped roughly at the guide's side.

The chief and the half-breed were engaged in an animated discussion across the defile from the prisoners.

"This hyar's a knockout, an' no mistake," growled Jerson. "They worked it on us in er way thet was too easy fer any use. I ain't a-carin' fer myself, but fer ther gal. What's goin' ter happen ter her worries me a heap."

"You made some mistakes ven you t'ought dere vas no pad Inchuns aroundt," observed the baron.

"Then it's er mistake everybody in ther Injun kentry is makin'. They're positive, at Custer, thet ther hosstyles hev all been run off ter ther Black Hills. Why, ef they hadn't been shore o' thet, they'd never hev let ther gal start out."

"Ditn't some sojers come along, Cherson?"

"We had an escort fer a ways; but at the end o' our last march, with Benton only five hours erway, the escort turned back."

"Too pad, py shinks, for der leedle girl. She must haf wanted to see her brudder a lot to take sooch a rite mit a horse."

"She wants ter see her brother, o' course," answered Jerson, "but thar's some un else she wants ter see, too. It's a feller by ther name o' Hollis, an' he's a cap'n, same as Miss Holcomb's brother."

"For vy iss dot?"

"She's engaged ter marry Cap'n Hollis, an'——"

"Ach, du lieber!"

"An' this Hollis has been hevin' a hard time fer some sort of er while. Fust, thar was a killin' at Custer, an' et was thort thet Hollis had a hand in it. Jest the suspicionin' threw Hollis off'n his mental balance. Yore pards, Buffler Bill an' the rest of 'em, helped Hollis ter



prove his innocence, an' a spell ago Hollis got back his lost reason. I dunno jest how ther thing happened, but onst more Buffler Bill an' pards had a hand in et. Miss Holcomb come right on from the East, as soon's she heard, and when she got ter Custer she was told thet her brother an' Hollis was at Benton. Nothin' must do but she had ter pull right out, an' the kunnel allowed that I was ther ombray ter see her through. Hyar's ther way I done it," and Jerson said hard things to himself.

"Some t'ings I don'd vas able to onderstandt," said the baron.

"What's thet?"

"For vy do der Inchuns make us bris'ners?"

"It's onusual, an' thet's er fact," said Jerson, a puzzled look crossing his face. "As a gin'ral thing, these hyar Sioux don't go ter so much trouble. Ther quickest way, with them, is the one they gin'rally use—a bullet, an' then a scalpin' knife. I ain't a notion why they've took us pris'ners. They might hev took ther gal a pris'ner, but it ain't like 'em ter fool thet a way with you an' me."

"Dey haf somet'ing on deir mindt," declared the baron, watching the discussion between the chief and the half-breed.

"Shore thar is," continued Jerson, "thar's a heap o' deviltry on their minds. I got er idee thet half-breed is back o' it. I hates breeds wuss'n ther smallpox. This hyar breed is Talk-a-heap, an' he's the wust case o' schemer ye ever heerd tell erbout. He useter hang around Custer, tryin' ter hire out fer a scout, but they wouldn't hev nothin' ter do with him. Why, he was at Custer not more'n two days ergo. I'll bet a bundle o' pelts he heerd while he was thar thet I was startin' fer Benton with ther gal, an' thet he hiked inter the hills, met these hostyles, an' put it up with 'em ter lay fer us."

"Vy vas dot?"

"Ask me somethin' easy."

"Do you know der ret feller vat der preed is making some palavers mit?"

"He's er Sioux war chief, but his trail an' mine ain't never crossed afore. Hesh up, fer a spell. Talk-a-heap is moseyin' thiserway."

The half-breed came over to the prisoners, his villainous face full of triumph and exultation. Halting between the two prisoners on the ground, he lowered his little piglike eyes and passed his glance from one to the other, and lastly to the forlorn figure of the girl on the boulder.

"You savvy me, Jerson, huh?" growled Talk-a-heap.

"Yas, blast yore measly hide," answered the guide, "I savvy you, all right."

"You savvy I was brav' mans, huh?"

"I savvy ye're a sneakin' coyote."

"Gal she go to Benton, all same find Cap Hollis, huh?"

"Thet's what. Now, ye schemin' half blood, Cap Hollis'll come huntin' you. When he finds ye, ye'll be up more kinds of er stump than I kin mention."

"I was brav' mans," and Talk-a-heap thumped his chest, "an' I no let Cap Hollis find me, or find de gal. Bumby, mebbeso, we give up de gal, give up you an' odder man, if white chief at Benton do de right t'ing."

"What's the right thing?"

"Let Masta Shella go. You savvy Masta Shella?"

"Shore I savvy him."

The half-breed turned on his heel and walked over to the girl. He talked to her for a few minutes. Neither

the baron nor the guide could hear what passed between the two, but they presently saw Talk-a-heap draw a pencil and a scrap of soiled paper from his pocket.

The girl's hands were freed, and pencil and paper were placed in her fingers. Laying the paper on the top of the boulder, she began to write, Talk-a-heap evidently dictating.

When the writing was done, Talk-a-heap took the paper and spelled over the written words. Evidently he was satisfied, for, after ordering one of the warriors to replace the bonds on the girl's wrists, he hurried back to the chief.

The chief also seemed pleased with what was read to him from the paper. He waved his hand toward a horse. Talk-a-heap, snatching a bow and arrows from one of the Indians, hurried to the horse, flung himself on the animal's back, and vanished at speed up the gully.

"Dot iss a peguliar pitzness," mused the baron.

He had no chance to talk about it with Jerson, however, for the Indians came, just then, and lifted him and the guide to the backs of their mounts. They were tied to their animals, and the girl was treated in the same way; then, each captive's horse in tow of a warrior, the party of hostiles rode up the gully bank, over it, and down the slope on the farther side.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MYSTERIOUS ARROW.

"If Wild Bill, Nomad, and Cayuse get back this afternoon or to-night, captain, we'll take that morning boat down the river."

Buffalo Bill, leaning back in an easy-chair on a shady porch of officers' row, Fort Benton, paused to knock the ashes from his cigar as he made the foregoing remark to Captain Holcomb.

"You can't tell much about these down-river boats, Cody," returned Holcomb. "It may leave in the morning, and it may not leave for several mornings. I hope there's a delay, for I have an object in view in wanting you to remain at the post for a few days longer."

"It's generally admitted that the Sioux have cleared out, and that there's nothing but peace for this part of the country. What business have I got that keeps me here? My orders are to report to Fort Meade as soon as I can conveniently do so."

"I'm not wanting you to stay because I think the Indians are going to make any more trouble."

"You don't need my evidence to convict Masta Shella."\*

"Not at all," answered Holcomb; "that yellow-haired scoundrel was caught red-handed, and his conviction is certain without any one appearing against him. He is safely confined in the guardhouse, and when he leaves it it will be to go to his doom. No, it won't be necessary for you to remain around here to testify against this Masta Shella."

"I'm getting curious," laughed the scout. "What's in the air, Holcomb?"

"A wedding," answered the captain, leaning toward the

\*See BUFFALO BILL STORIES, No. 505: "Buffalo Bill on the Upper Missouri; or, Pawnee Bill's Pick-up."



scout and dropping his voice. "It's a secret, so don't breathe a word. There's going to be a wedding, here at Benton, and the affair won't go off right if you and your pards are not on hand."

"Great Scott!" muttered the scout. "Whose wedding, Holcomb? Not yours, surely?"

Holcomb grinned and shook his head.

"Not mine, of course not. Captain Hollis."

"Captain Hollis is going to be married?"

"He is, and he doesn't know it. We're keeping the whole affair a secret from him. The poor old chap has been through so much that we're trying to give him a joyful surprise. Mary was eager to come on from Omaha, and when I wrote and told her that Hollis had recovered his reason, a message came over the military wire that she was starting. That's the way Mary does things. I don't know whether she's coming to Fort Custer, or to Fort Benton. The boat that got in from below, however, didn't bring her, so I presume she went to Custer. For all I know, she's there now. They won't lose much time in sending her on here, however."

Holcomb, and his friend Hollis were stationed at Fort Custer. Just now they were on detached duty at Fort Benton. It was but natural, therefore, that Miss Holcomb should have planned to go first to Custer, thinking that her brother and Hollis had returned to that post.

"This is news!" muttered the scout.

"As I said," returned the captain, "Hollis doesn't know the first thing about it. He's now at the cantonment at the mouth of the Musselshell, but he'll be called in as soon as Mary arrives. You know something about the affair between Mary and Hollis?"

"I've heard they were engaged—that they were engaged long before that disastrous affair at Custer when circumstances seemed to indicate that Hollis had shot Lieutenant Eldridge."

"That is correct. Mary and Hollis have known each other ever since they were children, and it seemed very fitting that they should fall in love with each other. They were sweethearts when Hollis and I were at West Point together, and they became engaged right after Hollis graduated, at the head of his class. Circumstances, however, made it necessary for the marriage to be put off year after year. Then, when a certain June had been settled upon, that Eldridge affair happened. In the last letter Mary received from Hollis—a letter written from the Fort Custer guardhouse—he told her that she must wait until he cleared his name, and that he could never ask her to marry him while such a crime was hanging over his head."

"Hollis, of course," commented the scout, "did exactly the right thing."

"It was the only thing he could do," declared Holcomb. "Mary, however, believed in him. She declared he was innocent, and that she was ready to marry him and then help him prove his innocence. Of course, Cody, I couldn't allow that."

"Of course not."

"You know the condition Hollis was in when he came to the post after masquerading as a tramp all through the Northwest. He was an officer and a gentleman, and he had high ideals. The suspicion that he was accountable for the taking off of Eldridge had undermined his reason. His innocence was proved, but Hollis was not himself. His brain had given way under the terrible blow that had been struck at him by that scoundrel, Blix."

The scout nodded.

"He was mildly insane, Holcomb," said he.

"I could not allow the marriage to go on while Hollis was in that condition, could I?"

"No."

"But after you found Hollis floating down river on that tree trunk—after that remarkable event which resulted in restoring Hollis' reason to him—there remained no bar. I was anxious, then, that the marriage should occur as soon as possible, so I wrote Mary, and she's on the way."

"Hollis," observed Buffalo Bill, "is a fine fellow—one of the finest fellows I've ever met in the army. I should like to be here at the wedding, but that may not come off for a month yet. My orders to report at Meade leave me little choice."

"Where are your pards?"

"Pawnee Bill is here at the post. Wild Bill, Nomad, and Cayuse are at the cantonment at the mouth of the Musselshell. They ought to be back to-night, at latest."

"And if they come, and the boat leaves before Mary gets here, you'll have to pull out for Meade?"

"I'm afraid so, captain."

"It will be a big disappointment to all of us—and to Mary herself as much as to any one else. I wrote her about what you and your pards had done for Hollis."

"This isn't the first time that duty has robbed me of a pleasure, Holcomb," returned the scout.

"I understand your position, Cody," said Holcomb regretfully, "and, of course, I can't urge you."

"If we have to leave before the wedding, I want you to explain the circumstances to your sister and to Hollis."

"I'll do that."

The captain sat back in his chair and smoked thoughtfully. The afternoon sun trailed over the low barracks across the parade ground and touched with golden glory the flag that drooped listlessly from the top of the flag-staff.

It was a drowsy afternoon, and the post was unusually quiet. Some of the officers' families were on the other porches, and the muffled shouts of children at play came peacefully to the ears of the scout and the captain.

"It begins to look like useless work," remarked Holcomb, stirring at last, "this building of cantonments along the Missouri. The uprising has been stamped out. We are in for an era of peace."

The scout frowned.

"I have a hunch, Holcomb," said he, "that something is yet due to happen before the hostiles are finally cowed and sent back where they belong."

"What can happen? You and your pards have captured the men who were keeping the roving Sioux stirred up. With those two white renegades out of the way, I can't for the life of me see where further trouble is coming from."

"Masta Shella, at the time he was captured, had a hundred Sioux warriors at his back."

"There weren't quite so many when we got through with the bucks at that wagon train!"

"No, not quite so many, but still enough to cause trouble if the reds happened to be so inclined."

"Don't forget the circumstances, Cody, that caused the Sioux to raise the siege of the wagon train! The warriors found that Masta Shella had deceived them—Masta Shella, the yellow-haired white renegade, and Broken



Arrow, their own medicine man. Why, they killed Broken Arrow with their own hands, and they'd have killed Masta Shella, too, if we hadn't made a prisoner of him."

"No doubt."

"Then how can you think that the rest of that Sioux war party would be inclined to keep up their useless hostilities?"

"Yellow Horse is the war chief of the Sioux."

"There is another buck named Yellow Horse, who is war chief of the Crows."

"Exactly. I don't know whether the Sioux chief has borrowed the Crow chief's name, or whether the name is simply a happenchance. Anyhow, this Sioux chief is a fighter. I have an idea that he may be figuring on raids and pillage before he takes his way back to the Pahasapah country."

"I don't think so, and neither does any one else in authority here."

"You, and all the others, may be right; still, I must say that I never have a hunch like this that doesn't mean something. I——"

The scout paused abruptly. The pronoun, even as it was on his lips, glided into a thud as something struck a porch post close to his head.

He whirled around in his chair. The next moment he discovered that the object was an Indian arrow, painted, and winged with feathers.

Tied to the feathered haft was a scrap of white.

"Blazes!" cried the amazed Holcomb, leaping to his feet.

The scout also had gained his feet. With a jump he had cleared the porch steps and was on the run across the parade ground. The slant of the arrow, as it had reached the post, was guiding him.

He was off to look for the one who had loosed the shaft.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MESSAGE.

The scout's first thought was to the effect that the arrow had been launched at him. Naturally, therefore, he wanted to find the skulking Indian who had let the bolt fly.

The arrow—judging by the angle at which it had imbedded its head into the post—had come from the end of the barracks, between the soldiers' quarters and the stables.

As the scout flung out of the inclosure between the barracks and the stables, Pawnee Bill ran through one of the stable doors.

"What's doing, necarnis?" he called.

The mere fact that the scout was at a run assured the bowie man that something unusual was happening.

"Come on, Pawnee!" Buffalo Bill called over his shoulder.

Pawnee Bill raced off and came alongside of his pard just after the sentry had been passed. The scout had stopped beside a thicket. There a little damp earth had held the print of a moccasin.

"Injuns!" muttered the prince of the bowie.

"Looks like a Sioux moccasin," said the scout.

"Shades of Unk-te-hee, but you're right! What can a stray Sioux have been doing around here?"

The scout did not pause for reply, but leaped into the thicket. He emerged again, a moment later, and raced off through more chaparral, down a slope and into scarred timber that fringed the river's edge. Then he paused once more.

"Pony tracks!" exclaimed the bowie man.

"The red has got away, Pawnee," answered the scout. "He left his pony here, sneaked up the hill and into that clump of brush, then turned loose an arrow. He had a strong hand for the bowstring! Why, that arrow flew across the parade ground and struck a post of officers' row, not more than a foot from where I was sitting."

"It was intended for you?"

"That's what I thought when I made a run in this direction. Come to think of it, though, it seems queer that the archer didn't make a better shot—if the arrow had really been intended for me. The fellow who released that arrow certainly knew how to use a bow."

"It looks to me, necarnis," observed Pawnee Bill, after a few moments' thought, "as though the skulking red was really trying to pick you off. It was an attempt to play even for what you did to Masta Shella. We can climb onto our horses and run out this trail. What do you say?"

"Not worth while, Pawnee. I don't want to tangle up with any more of these redskin games, on the upper Missouri. We have orders to report at Fort Meade, and all we're waiting for is the arrival of our pards from the cantonment, and the departure of the *General Cook* for down river. Let's go back to Holcomb. I saw something white tied to that arrow, and I've a curiosity to learn what it is."

"Something white?" echoed Pawnee Bill, striding along at his pard's side.

"It may have been my imagination," answered the scout, "for I didn't waste much time looking at the thing. All I was thinking of was getting hands on the fellow that let the arrow fly."

When they had crossed the parade ground they found Holcomb standing on the porch, the arrow at his feet and a crumpled paper unfolded in his hand. There was a look of fear and amazement on the captain's face as he lifted his eyes to the pards.

"What's the matter, Holcomb?" demanded the scout.

The captain tried to talk, but words failed him. Sinking limply into his chair, he drew a trembling hand across his forehead.

"Buck up, Holcomb!" cried the scout. "Something has happened. Tell us what it is."

"Mary—she's—she's in the hands of the hostile Sioux!" the captain finally managed to blurt out.

"How can that be?"

"This note——"

"Where did it come from?"

"It was tied to the arrow!"

"Don't fret," admonished the bowie man. "The note may be a lie. Read it, necarnis," he added, to the scout.

Buffalo Bill had taken the note from the captain's nerveless fingers.

"It is written in lead pencil," said the scout, "and is none too plain."

Then he read aloud:

"TO THE COMMANDANT AT FORT BENTON: I was



coming from Fort Custer to Fort Benton, with a guide named Newt Jerson. Where the trail from the Yellowstone comes into the Custer trail we met the baron, one of Buffalo Bill's friends. In a gully, an hour later, we were set upon and captured by a dozen Sioux, led by Yellow Horse. I am writing this at the dictation of Talk-a-heap, a half-breed who is with Yellow Horse and his braves. Talk-a-heap says that we are all three to be killed unless Masta Shella is released and sent to the foot of Cheyenne Hill by noon, to-morrow. My love to my brother and Captain Hollis.

'MARY HOLCOMB.'

The captain groaned as the scout finished reading the note.

"What was Miss Holcomb doing, crossing the Indian country at such a time?" queried the bowie man. "It can't be possible that she was on the way to Benton with only one guide and no escort."

"It is not only possible, but probable," said Holcomb. "I know she has been captured by those murderous red scoundrels."

"As I said before, that note may be a lie."

"It can't be a lie. The note was written by my sister. I know her handwriting, and there can't be any mistake."

"But she was coming with only the one guide——"

"The country between here and Custer is supposed to be clear of hostile Indians. It is a mistake we all have made—all of us except Cody. He seemed to understand the situation better than any of us. This is a blow! I wonder if those red devils really mean what they say?"

The scout was thoughtful for a space.

"Yellow Horse is having some one else to do his plotting for him," said he finally. "This half-breed, Talk-a-heap, is the one. I never saw a breed yet who couldn't give a full blood cards and spades when it comes to hatching up deviltry. It's Talk-a-heap who's behind all this."

"That doesn't make it much better for Mary," muttered Holcomb.

"I tell you what makes it look better for your sister, Holcomb," went on the scout encouragingly, "and that is that Talk-a-heap and Yellow Horse are trying to secure the freedom of Masta Shella. They're holding the three prisoners as hostages. Between now and noon to-morrow your sister and the other two captives will be safe enough."

"But Masta Shella won't be released on any such demand as that!" exclaimed Captain Holcomb. "I couldn't ask Colonel Weatherby to do such a thing. The release of Masta Shella would set the whole Indian country by the ears again."

"Of course, captain, Weatherby wouldn't release Masta Shella."

"Then what can be done for my sister?" cried Holcomb, in a burst of despair and grief.

"We could ride to Cheyenne Hill with a force of troopers," said Pawnee Bill.

"The Sioux wouldn't show themselves. They'll be watching from some place near at hand. When they see the troopers they'll know that we do not intend to listen to their demands, and that Masta Shella is not to be set free. What would happen to the prisoners then?"

The pards, no less than the captain, knew exactly what would happen. It was too ugly an alternative to contemplate.

"It gets me, necarnis," went on Pawnee Bill, "why these Sioux bucks are so anxious to have Masta Shella turned over to them. Even to the Sioux he's a discredited leader. His game was given away, when Holcomb's wagon train was besieged, and Broken Arrow, who helped play the game, was killed. Why do the reds want Masta Shella? Why do they want him so much that they're willing to trade three prisoners for him?"

"Give it up," answered the scout, "but we have to take this note just as it comes to us. Holcomb says he's sure it was written by his sister. That proves beyond all doubt that Miss Holcomb is in the hands of the Yellow Horse outfit."

"Be sure of that," declared Holcomb, lifting his haggard face. "Mary wrote that note, and some buck stole in close to the post and shot the note at us on an arrow. Mary is a captive. This is a different surprise for Hollis than the one I had intended for him!"

"Hollis is at the cantonment, Holcomb, and he doesn't need to know anything about this until we rescue your sister."

Holcomb again started to his feet.

"You mean, Cody," he said eagerly, "that you will stay here and help? You will take charge and do what you can? You won't leave for Meade as soon as you had intended to——"

"You don't think for a moment that I would leave matters at Benton in such shape, do you?" returned Buffalo Bill.

"But you said——"

"I said that my orders summoned me to Meade as soon as I had finished my work here. Now that this has happened, I do not consider my work finished, not by a long shot. If your sister, alone, was in the hands of the Sioux, I should stay just as quick as though my pard, the baron, was not also in their hands."

"An-pe-tu-we!" put in the bowie man. "Where in Sam Hill did the baron manage to get mixed in this? I thought he was still in Arizona."

"So did I," returned the scout, "but you never can tell much about the baron. He has a very nimble fancy, and he follows it wherever it chances to lead him. He's with Miss Holcomb and Jerson. I'm ready to believe that the note written by Miss Holcomb states the truth, even though it was dictated by Talk-a-heap."

"What are you going to do, Buffalo Bill?" queried the captain. "Don't depend on me for any planning. I'm dazed, and can hardly think."

"I'll attend to the planning, Holcomb." Buffalo Bill turned to the bowie man. "Pawnee," he added, "five Crow scouts came in yesterday. Are they still at the post?"

"They were here an hour ago," the bowie man answered.

"Tell them Pa-e-has-ka wants to see them."

Pawnee Bill hurried down the steps and off across the parade ground.

## CHAPTER V.

### BUFFALO BILL'S PLAN.

The five Crow scouts were warriors belonging to Umbas-a-hoos' band. They had come up from the Little Big Horn in order to help the white men make war on



their traditional enemies, the Cutthroats (Sioux). The sudden quelling of the uprising had left nothing for the red scouts to do, and they had been ordered back to Custer.

But they loved to sit in the sun at Benton, smoke army tobacco and play the Indian game of "hand." They had left, when ordered to do so, but they had come back. Again they had been ordered to go, but could not tear themselves away.

Pawnee Bill presently returned with them, five strapping bucks, stepping high and toeing-in as they came along the walk and up the steps to the porch.

The scout looked them over sharply. Stolidly they underwent the scrutiny. They were pleased that Pa-e-has-ka should have sent for them, but there was no pleasure reflected in their gaunt, sphinxlike faces. They had grunted out the usual "How!" and were now calmly waiting.

Buffalo Bill presently opened up with the hand talk.

"You want to go out after the Sioux?" he asked.

Instantly every brave pulled himself a little straighter and something like interest ran pulsing through his leathery face. Each one nodded.

"You want to go with Pa-e-has-ka?" went on the scout.

"Ai!" came the prompt response.

"If Pa-e-has-ka tells you to go with Kulux Kittybux, you will do as he tells you to do?"

"Ai!"

Kulux Kittybux was Pawnee Bill.

"Then have your ponies ready before next sleep is finished. That's all."

The Crows did not leave. They still remained.

"Mebbeso we git feefty dollar?" remarked Nahkee.

The scout pulled a buckskin bag from his pocket. The jingle of the bag brought the first sign of real feeling to the copper-colored faces.

From the bag the scout took five twenty-dollar gold pieces and gave one of the yellow boys to each of the Indians.

"Him only twenty dollar," demurred Nahkee.

"Him all same fifty dollar when you do the work. Twenty dollar now, thirty dollar more, by and by."

"Ugh!" grunted Nahkee.

The grunt was taken up and repeated by Spotted Wolf, Snake-that-strikes, Thunder Cloud, and Crooked Foot.

In single file they descended the porch steps and made their way back to the place where Pawnee Bill had found them.

"Nahkee will have it all in less than two hours," observed the bowie man; "he's a shark at this hand game."

"That will make the lot of them all the more anxious for the rest of their money, Pawnee," returned the scout. "We can depend on them, all right."

"What's the game? You said they were to be under my charge, necarnis."

"Their game is to scout around the vicinity of Cheyenne Hill. I want you to start for the place before daylight, Pawnee. See that they are well armed. I think the colonel will let us have five army rifles and plenty of ammunition for all five of them."

"I'll see to that," spoke up Holcomb. "But suppose they don't locate the Sioux? And, even if they do locate Yellow Horse and his outfit, what can the five of them do against the Sioux war party? There are a dozen—perhaps fifty—in that outfit."

"The Crows," explained the scout, "are to locate the Sioux and the prisoners. They are not to fight them. We want to get the prisoners away from the war party without injuring Miss Holcomb. If there was shooting——"

The scout paused. A gray pallor had crossed the captain's face.

"But you understand, Holcomb," he finished, in a kindly tone. "We're going to rescue your sister, my Dutch pard, and Newt Jerson. We've got to use tact, and perhaps a few tricks."

"I can't understand how you're going to accomplish anything, Cody. If the Sioux discover your Crow scouts, they'll know at once that Masta Shella is not going to be turned loose. That will be their signal to—to——"

Holcomb's voice broke.

"Now, captain," said the scout, "don't be all broken up over this before you learn my plans."

He turned to Pawnee Bill.

"Pard," he went on, "do your scouting before noon. After that, conceal yourself and the Absaroke aides in the chaparral near the north side of Cheyenne Hill. As I remember the hill," he proceeded, kneeling to make a finger diagram on the porch floor, "its base is an oval. One end of the oval lies to the north. The hill is bare of trees and undergrowth, but there is a fringe of brush less than an eighth of a mile off, near the river."

"That's right," dropped in the captain.

"Be in the chaparral by the river on the north side of Cheyenne Hill promptly at noon, Pawnee," proceeded the scout. "Understand?"

"That's clear enough, necarnis," answered the bowie man, "but it's not so clear what we're to do there."

There was a twinkle in the scout's eye as he continued.

"You're to wait there until Masta Shella shows up at the foot of the hill."

"But Masta Shella won't be allowed to go!" broke out the captain impatiently. "I see your scheme, Cody. You want to release Masta Shella, and then have him go to the foot of the hill and lure the Sioux into his vicinity; then Pawnee and his Crows are to rush out and recapture the white renegade and the reds who happen to be with him. But it won't work. I couldn't even ask the colonel to take such chances with the prisoner."

"Certainly you couldn't, Holcomb," said the scout patiently, "and you haven't guessed what I'm up to. Masta Shella won't leave the guardhouse."

"But you said——"

"Now," interrupted the scout, "we'll get down to the kernel of the plot. Every night I've stayed at Benton Pawnee and I have had a room that looks like a junk shop. There are all sorts of costumes hanging up in that room, and all sorts of false whiskers and wigs."

"They have private theatricals here during the winter," explained Holcomb, "and masquerade balls, and all that. You and Pawnee are bunked in the storeroom."

"I made a guess that explained the matter," said the scout. "Among the wigs I saw one of long yellow hair, just the shade of Masta Shella's hair."

"Ah!" murmured the captain. "I'm beginning to understand. You, Cody, are planning to rig yourself out as Masta Shella."

"Keno."

"You're going to ride to certain death, to-morrow, in the attempt to save my sister. I won't have it."



The scout laughed softly.

"Wrong!" said he. "I'm not going to commit suicide, Holcomb, but fool the Sioux war party."

"What will happen to you when Yellow Horse and his gang of red cutthroats come close enough to you to discover that you are not Masta Shella?"

"In the first place," expounded the scout, "not all the gang will come to me at the foot of the hill. Yellow Horse will come, I feel sure, and probably this half-breed, Talk-a-heap. There may be a few more, but not enough to do me any particular damage."

"You'll be at the mercy of all the bucks who do come down——"

"No. If they try to do anything I'll be doing something, too. Besides, Pawnee Bill and the Absarokes will be watching, under cover. If any of my pards get in from the cantonment before Pawnee starts out with his Crows, they'll ride with the scouting party."

"Why not let me go along with a detachment of troopers?" asked Holcomb.

"A trooper is a good fighter, but he's a poor scout. We've got to keep the movements of the scouts a secret from the Sioux. The hostile reds must not suspect that we are framing up a deal against them."

"I understand that, but five Crows with Pawnee will be too small a force."

"Our principal strength will lie in our mobility—our ability to move swiftly from point to point and strike before the reds know what we're up to. The troopers are not fleet enough. A small force that can be rapidly controlled is far and away more effective, in this case, than a larger force of white men, that must get around slowly."

"There's something in that."

"There's everything in it."

"But I want to do something," fretted Holcomb. "I don't want to stay at the post, cooling my heels, while you, and Pawnee Bill, and these Crows are doing all the work."

"Of course you don't, and I've planned for you to take a hand in the game. To-morrow noon, Holcomb, take a picked force of twelve men and shack along toward Cheyenne Hill. What happens at noon will pretty near tell the tale, so far as my plans are concerned. If we succeed, you'll probably see us hiking for Benton with the three prisoners. There's a chance that we may be more than glad to have you cover the retreat."

"I'll be ready to do that, never fear. Depend on me."

The scout again turned to the prince of the bowie.

"Pard," said he, "don't show yourself, or let any of the Crows show themselves, to-morrow noon, until you see my right hand lifted."

"Correct," said Pawnee Bill.

"I don't know myself just what will happen at Cheyenne Hill, so I can't state exactly what I'm going to do. If you, or any of the Crows, see me on the way to the hill, don't try to cross my trail. Let me go on. It wouldn't do to have any Sioux scouts see me talking with you or with any of the Crow scouts."

"I savvy the burro, necarnis," said Pawnee Bill.

"Then you might go with Holcomb and explain the situation to Colonel Weatherby."

The captain, greatly heartened by the scout's calm confidence, left the porch with Pawnee Bill. Together they made their way across the parade ground to the colonel's office.

Buffalo Bill resumed his chair and lighted another cigar.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CHEYENNE HILL.

Cheyenne Hill, the place set by Talk-a-heap for the meeting of the Sioux with the released Masta Shella, was some twelve miles up the river from Benton.

Pawnee Bill and his Absaroke scouts got away in the early hours of the morning. They took with them the scout's war house, Bear Paw.

The big black, if the scout had ridden the animal while posing as Masta Shella, would have aroused the suspicions of the Sioux plotters, for the war horse was almost as well known to them as was the scout himself.

None of the scout's other pards arrived from the cantonment on the Musselshell, so they could not ride with the prince of the bowie and the Absarokes. The scout was sorry for this, as he would have been more than pleased to have had the masterful Wild Bill, the redoubtable old Nomad, and the clever Little Cayuse in the scouting party. However, Pawnee Bill was capable of managing everything—he had forgotten more about such work than most frontiersmen ever knew—and the scout relied upon him implicitly.

Every detail of the plan was carefully followed out. And the details reached farther than the scout had outlined in his talk with Holcomb and Pawnee on the porch in officers' row.

Sioux scouts might be watching everything that took place at the post, and it was necessary for Buffalo Bill to proceed with exceeding care.

At eight o'clock in the morning, an Indian cayuse with a braided bridle, and only a saddle blanket girded to his back, was led to the door of the guardhouse by a trooper. Holcomb, with a small detail of men, approached the guardhouse, a few minutes later, and went inside.

Buffalo Bill, in the room with Masta Shella, was preparing himself for his risky venture.

He was not particular to copy Masta Shella's clothing—he could have purloined the prisoner's clothes if he had wanted to do that—but he was exceedingly particular about the wig with the long yellow hair. This he had adjusted carefully, allowing the yellow hair to fall down over his own flowing locks.

He wore his own hat, pulled over his own coat a soldier's blouse, and incased his nether limbs in copper-riveted overalls, the bottoms of which he tucked into his boot tops. His belt, with one of his revolvers hanging in his holster, he had sent away with Bear Paw. The other revolver was thrust into the front of the overalls. He wanted it to appear to the Sioux as though he had been cast adrift from the post unarmed, and on a scrub cayuse, as would have been the case had Masta Shella been freed.

"What the blazes you tryin' ter do?" demanded Masta Shella, the prisoner, rattling his chains as he turned to size up the scout.

"Making myself an understudy for you," replied the scout.

"What fer?"

"If you don't know, you can't tell anybody."

Masta Shella grunted and settled himself back on his bench.



"How do I stack up, Holcomb?" demanded the scout. "From the back, with all that yellow hair," the captain answered, "you're a dead ringer for Masta Shella. But from the front—well, at half a dozen yards, any one who knows Cody could tell him without a second look."

"If Yellow Horse or Talk-a-heap comes that close to me," laughed the scout, "I'll not give him a chance to take a second look. Is the horse outside?"

"Yes."

"The horse I picked out last night?"

"The same; and I must say he's a mangy-looking little brute."

"There's bottom to him, in spite of his looks. A Roman-nosed cayuse is always a hundred per cent. better than you'd size him up, from his general appearance."

The door of the guardhouse was flung open, just then, and Colonel Weatherby strode in. He was a small man, but he was a mighty warrior, and his name was one to conjure with in that part of the country.

"I've been thinking this over, Cody," said he, "and I must say I don't like it."

"What is there about it, colonel, that you don't like?" asked the scout.

"Why, the danger you're running into."

"Danger? What's that?" and the scout laughed.

"It's like this," persisted the colonel. "Suppose you slip a cog over there at Cheyenne Hill? Suppose——"

"But I won't."

"You say yourself that you don't know exactly what you'll do until you see what happens at the hill."

"That's correct. I'm not a mind reader, colonel, and I'm not gifted with second sight. Circumstances alter cases."

"Suppose you're floored with a bullet——"

"Don't suppose anything so improbable."

"Well, if you won't listen to that, suppose you yourself drop into the hands of the reds? If Talk-a-heap, the wily scoundrel, should get hold of you, there'd be nothing left for me to do but to turn loose this Masta Shella."

"What good would that do, colonel? You don't think for a minute that Talk-a-heap and Yellow Horse would let me go simply because you had released Masta Shella? And, in spite of that note that was flung into camp on the arrow, you know as well as I do that Yellow Horse and Talk-a-heap never intended to release my Dutch pard, Miss Holcomb, and Newt Jerson, even if Masta Shella was cast adrift."

"No red will let go his hold on a white prisoner if he can help it."

"Then we've got to fight this thing through as I have planned it; there's no other way."

The colonel chewed on an unlighted cigar.

"If anything happens to you," he growled, "I'll have a nice report to send in!"

"Something will happen to me, but it won't be at all serious. All ready, captain?"

"All ready, Buffalo Bill," answered Holcomb.

"Then yank me out of this military yamen and throw me onto the cayuse."

Masta Shella watched the play with popping eyes. He couldn't understand it, down to the fine points, but he had overheard enough to give him an inkling of the scout's real purpose.

Buffalo Bill was hustled out of the guardhouse by the men with Holcomb. Just outside the door he was cov-

ered with soldier guns and ordered to mount the horse. After he had obeyed the horse was led through the stockade gate and pointed up river.

"Scat!" cried the men with the leveled guns.

"Get out of here!" roared the captain. "If we see anything of you inside of two minutes, we'll shoot."

Feigning terror, the scout dug in with his heels and the Roman-nosed cayuse bounded for the dim trail that led up the river in the direction of Cheyenne Hill.

He was out of sight in one minute, and he looked fearfully backward as a screen of brush hid him from the hill and the post.

Nothing had been seen or heard of Wild Bill, Nomad, and Little Cayuse up to the time the scout had left. If they came in later they were to accompany the captain and his picked squad, and by no means to try to go on to Cheyenne Hill on their own hook.

"Those missing pards of mine," thought Buffalo Bill as he rode, "will be badly cut up when they learn what they have missed. I should have liked to have them along, but when you can't have what you want you must do the best with what you have."

It was a lonesome trail the scout rode. The cayuse was a pounder, and every time his hoofs came down there was no spring of the muscles, or of the knees. It was like a gallop on a saw horse. Stirrups would have enabled the scout to ease the jolt somewhat, but there were no stirrups.

The dim trail led through scanty timber, and occasionally cleared the timber and debouched through the open country. He figured that it was eleven o'clock when he first glimpsed the bare crest of Cheyenne Hill, looming up ahead of him and to the left. He drew to slower pace, for he had plenty of time at his disposal.

What had Pawnee Bill and the Absarokes accomplished? he was asking himself. In the end the success of that day's work might depend upon the work the prince of the bowie and his red aides had performed.

Turning suddenly from the blind trail, the scout pointed the cayuse for the north slope of the hill.

He saw no one, neither Sioux, Crow, nor white man. He knew he should see none of the Crows, nor Pawnee Bill, for his instructions had carefully covered that point, but he had had a fear that some Sioux warrior might meet him on the trail and try to ride with him. Such a move would have spelled discovery and disaster.

However, as before stated, he encountered no one, white or red.

On leaving the brush and the timber, he set an angling course. To the right of the hill's north slope he observed, with satisfaction, a screen of alders and other undergrowth. Somewhere, in that line of brush, he felt sure that Pawnee Bill and his Absarokes were waiting—waiting for the moment when he should raise his arm and summon them to his aid.

Ten minutes after leaving the timber he was halted at the north foot of the hill.

"Now, reds," he muttered, peering around, "play your hand. It's noon, and you're to suppose that Masta Shella is on deck and—— Ah!" he broke off suddenly, as a horse and rider appeared around a small spur that jutted out of the hill's western side, "here's some one. What! Only one? This is luck. It's the breed, Talk-a-heap, if I'm any judge of mongrels."

Pretending not to see the approaching half-breed, the



scout turned his horse and looked in an opposite direction. This placed his back toward the half-breed; and his back, as Holcomb had informed him, looked identically like the back of the real Masta Shella.

The thump of hoofs came close at a gallop. Still, the scout did not turn.

"Masta Shella!" called a voice.

The half-breed was almost at the scout's side. He whirled to an about-face, then, and things began to happen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TAKING A PRISONER.

A quick glance at the spur did not reveal to the scout the presence of any Sioux who might have been waiting for Talk-a-heap to transact his business and return with the supposed Masta Shella.

This was a pleasing discovery, and the scout's purpose, suddenly formed, needed not to be changed.

He would lay Talk-a-heap by the heels and make off with him.

The half-breed, about to use his tongue and make good his right to his name, suddenly acted as though frozen to the back of his cayuse.

He stared at the scout, his mouth agape and astonishment in his face. He may not have recognized Buffalo Bill, but he certainly failed to recognize Masta Shella in the scout's make-up.

Before the half-breed could move the scout was alongside him.

"I want you, Talk-a-heap!" said the scout.

As he reached out his hands, the half-breed suddenly awoke to the fact that this white man who looked something like Masta Shella was on the point of grappling with him. A rifle lay across his horse in front of him. Dodging the hands, Talk-a-heap lifted the rifle and lunged at the scout with its muzzle.

The scout evaded the muzzle, then caught it in his hands, wrenched the gun away, and struck at the half-breed with the clubbed stock.

Talk-a-heap ducked so wildly to avoid the blow that he hurled himself from the back of his horse. The butt of the rifle described a vicious half circle in the air, met no resistance, and flew out of the scout's hands.

The scout dropped from his horse. Talk-a-heap, giving vent to a wild yell, whirled and started to run back along the base of the hill.

In half a second Buffalo Bill was on the ground, and in a second more he had overhauled the half-breed and grabbed him by the shoulders.

Talk-a-heap whirled and began to fight in good earnest. From somewhere about his clothes he had developed a knife. He made a murderous, whole-arm swing, calculating, no doubt, to impale the scout on the blade's point. But his calculations missed the desired result.

Swift as lightning, Buffalo Bill dropped to his knees. The blade described a glimmering arc over his head. Gripping Talk-a-heap about the legs, the scout gave a heave that overthrew him.

The half-breed landed on the flat of his back, with an impact that was terrific. His head must have struck something hard, for he threw out his arms spasmodically

and relapsed into silence and inaction with a suddenness that surprised Buffalo Bill.

Possibly he was shamming. This thought occurred to the scout, and he would have made an examination of the half-breed, had there been time.

But time, it now developed, was exceedingly limited.

Well down the side of Cheyenne Hill could be seen a smother of mounted Sioux. Their ponies' legs were working like piston rods, hurrying their riders to the scene of the trouble between the half-breed and Masta Shella.

The scout looked around. Talk-a-heap's horse had bounded away in a fright, and the Roman-nosed cayuse was on the point of shying off. One leap enabled the scout to grab the reins of the cayuse, and he hurried the brute to the half-breed's side.

The Sioux were advancing at speed. Still the scout did not lift his hand in signal to Pawnee Bill and the Crows.

"Too many Sioux and not enough Crows," ran the burden of the scout's swift thoughts. "We can't tip our hands yet, with nothing discovered, so far as I know, as to the whereabouts of Miss Holcomb and the other two prisoners. I'll work this out on the line of least resistance."

It was plain to Buffalo Bill, by then, that Talk-a-heap was not shamming. He was really stunned and powerless.

Lifting his helpless captive to the back of the cayuse, the scout mounted behind him and turned around the eastern side of the hill.

Pawnee Bill must have wondered at his pard's move, but he was true to his instructions in spite of his pard's peril. The sign had not been given, and neither the bowie man nor his Absarokes showed themselves.

Flickering along in pursuit of the scout and his overloaded cayuse were seven Sioux warriors. During that flight and pursuit, the scout's judgment of the cayuse's bottom proved correct.

Gamely the cayuse stood up under the work required of him. He lost ground in the race, to be sure, but he lost it slowly. Puffing and snorting, he leaped along the base of the hill, the scout scanning the topography of the country for some good place to make a stand.

Another spur ran out from that side of the hill, well toward the south end of the irregular oval that was described by the hill's base.

This ridge was not more than ten feet high, but it was literally plastered with boulders, and there was a veritable nest of them on its top.

The scout turned the panting cayuse up the rough slope. It was rough work, and slow, but there was only ten feet of a climb, and the cayuse made it.

Here the formation of the boulders was far more favorable for a stand than the scout had dared to hope. The nest was really a nest, consisting of a small cleared area with jagged granite bulwarks guarding it on every side.

The cayuse stumbled into the cleared space and dropped to his knees. The scout and his unconscious prisoner were saved the trouble of dismounting, for the cayuse's fall threw them from his back.

Leaving cayuse and prisoner to shift for themselves for a space, the scout whirled, jerked free his revolver, and sank to his knees. The weapon barked between two of the rocks, and the singing lead caused the seven Sioux to halt suddenly—so suddenly that their ponies sat down and slid on the hard earth.



Instantly all seven of them made the peace sign. Two or three of them, getting their mounts in hand, rode the sign, thus endeavoring, by all means in their power, to show the scout that their intentions were not hostile but friendly.

"They think I'm Masta Shella," muttered the scout. "Talk-a-heap is the only one that isn't fooled. But I can't see Yellow Horse. Where's the war chief?"

A movement behind the scout caused him to turn. Talk-a-heap was reviving. He was still bewildered, and until he could get the drift of events he would not be dangerous, but the scout had to deal with him at once.

With a final look at the seven redskins, still frantically making their peace signs at a safe distance, Buffalo Bill turned away from the boulders and laid quick hands on Talk-a-heap. Throwing him down, he pressed the muzzle of the revolver to his forehead.

"Savvy the gun, Talk-a-heap?" he hissed.

"All same," muttered the man.

"Savvy him go off you make a noise?"

"Ugh!" grunted Talk-a-heap, cringing.

Covering his prisoner with the revolver, the scout rose erect and backed to the cayuse. Working with one hand, and keeping his menacing eyes and the revolver point on the half-breed, he removed the band that secured the blanket to the cayuse's back.

The band was of strong leather, and the scout knelt on his prisoner while he ripped the band in half with his knife.

"On your face, now!" he ordered. "Pronto!"

Talk-a-heap turned over obediently, and Buffalo Bill quickly secured his wrists, and then his feet.

"Not a word, Talk-a-heap," he threatened, "in a voice that's loud enough to reach your red friends. Try it, and I'll train the gun on you. Your miserable life is valuable to you, I reckon, and if you want to keep it you'll follow orders. Savvy?"

Talk-a-heap's answer was a gurgle, but it was an affirmative gurgle. He realized that Buffalo Bill, although at bay among the rocks, had the whip hand over him, at all events.

The scout stole another look between the boulders. The seven Sioux were clustered together, evidently talking over the peculiar situation.

Certainly the swift run of events must have struck them as most remarkable. Here was Masta Shella, released by the cunning of Yellow Horse and Talk-a-heap, suddenly turning upon one of his rescuers and running away from the rest of them.

"Where's Yellow Horse, Talk-a-heap?"

The scout threw the question at the half-breed while continuing to keep his eyes on the seven beyond the low ridge.

"'Bout two-t'ree minit, by gee-krips, you bettar look out," growled Talk-a-heap, "dose Sioux dey was get your hair."

"I'm asking you a question, Talk-a-heap," returned the scout. "Where's Yellow Horse?"

"He stay with de pris'ners. You bettar look out. Dose Kul-tus-til-akum, dey grab your hair."

"How far away are the prisoners?"

"Yaas, I don't tell dat. You look for save your hair, by gee-krips, and not bodder 'bout de pris'ners."

One of the Sioux at that moment, with both hands lifted high, palms outward, began riding toward the foot

of the low ridge. In order to make the scout more certain of his peaceable intentions, he left his weapons with his friends.

"I'm going to palaver with one of the reds, Talk-a-heap," muttered the scout, "and, while I'm doing it, you can save your bacon by keeping a still tongue in your head. Cumtux?"

Talk-a-heap gave another affirmative gurgle, and the scout crouched low and watched warily.

"Stop!" he shouted, when the Indian had come within easy earshot. "Now, redskin, what do you want with Masta Shella?"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### GETTING CLEAR.

The redskin who had advanced upon the ridge appeared to have a fair command of English. For that very purpose, probably, he had been selected by the rest to act as spokesman and get some explanation from Masta Shella of his queer actions.

"You all same Masta Shella, huh?" shouted the Indian.

"All same."

"Why Masta Shella make um fight?"

"No savvy why you try make um jump Masta Shella."

"No hurt um Masta Shella. All same friends."

"Why you chase um Masta Shella?"

"Masta Shella run, all same ketch um Talk-a-heap. Injun run to ketch um Masta Shella, tell um Injun all same friend."

"No like um," said the scout.

"Why you no like um? Yellow Horse him save um Masta Shella. Talk-a-heap him save um Masta Shella. Why you no like um?"

"Why Yellow Horse save um?"

"Yellow Horse all same friend."

"Sioux warriors kill um Broken Arrow, Masta Shella's friend. How Masta Shella know Sioux warriors no kill um Masta Shella?"

The scout, in this talk, was harking back to the sanguinary event that had occurred at the time Holcomb's wagon train was besieged by an overpowering force of Sioux. Yellow Horse and his warriors had been fooled into attacking the train by the duplicity of Masta Shella and Broken Arrow. In their anger, when the double-dealing was discovered, the Sioux had killed Broken Arrow.

"Yellow Horse heap sorry him kill um Broken Arrow. All same save um Masta Shella from white pony sogers."

"No like um double tongue," shouted the scout. "Sioux talk um double tongue."

"Talk um straight tongue," insisted the redskin.

"No b'leeve um."

"Masta Shella come, go with Injun to Yellow Horse. Yellow Horse tell um."

"Where's Yellow Horse?"

"Him stay with pris'ners, two hat weavers, one white squaw. You come, Masta Shella; come go with Injun to Yellow Horse."

"Nah! Injun bring Yellow Horse to Masta Shella."

"Yellow Horse no like um. Yellow Horse him say Injun bring um Masta Shella."



"Masta Shella no like um. Injun make a good many bad play this grass."

"You no come?"

"Masta Shella stay here. You take um other Injun go for Yellow Horse. Yellow Horse say him friend of Masta Shella, then Masta Shella b'leeve."

"We bring um," said the Indian, and turned his pony and cantered back toward his waiting comrades.

Then followed another council. After a palaver of two or three minutes, the spokesman for the seven Sioux again approached the ridge, hands in the air.

"What do you want now?" yelled the scout.

"Masta Shella let um Talk-a-heap go 'long with Injun?" asked the Sioux.

"No let um," replied the scout firmly.

"One Injun go for Yellow Horse," suggested the Sioux, "other Injun him stay, huh?"

"All Injun go. All Injun no go, Masta Shella shoot um Talk-a-heap."

"No shoot um," cried the redskin; "Injun all go."

Again he turned and rejoined his companions, again there was a council, and then, to the scout's surprise, the whole seven whirled their ponies and galloped toward the north end of Cheyenne Hill.

"What do you think of that!" chuckled the scout. "I've fooled that outfit to the top of their bent. They're all going for Yellow Horse."

"Injun blame' fool!" snarled Talk-a-heap.

"I agree with you, Talk-a-heap," returned the scout, getting up and pushing the revolver into the band of his trousers.

"Dey all same t'ink you Masta Shella," went on the half-breed.

"They don't know the difference, Talk-a-heap. I kept down behind the rocks, and they evidently didn't recognize any difference between my voice and the white renegade's."

"Byebye dose Injun dey come back, den by gee-krips you lose your hair."

"When they come back, Talk-a-heap, I won't be here."

"Den me, I tell dose Injun you not Masta Shella."

"No, you won't. You won't be here, either."

Bending down, the scout grabbed the half-breed by the shoulders and lifted him upright on his bound feet.

"Were you gone take me, huh?" demanded the half-breed.

"I'm going to take you to a place where you'll be safer than you are here."

"By gee-krips I no like dat. Who you ma'ns, huh?"

"Pa-e-has-ka. Savvy Pa-e-has-ka?"

A shiver ran through the form of the half-breed.

"Ugh!" he muttered, "dis be good chance for geet keel. Pa-e-has-ka! Whoosh!"

"Up on the horse with you, Talk-a-heap! You can't help yourself much, but be careful you don't do anything to hinder my work. Now!"

The scout lifted the breed in his brawny arms and laid him across the pony like a bag of meal.

"I lak bettar go on de foot," grumbled Talk-a-heap. "No like to ride da cayuse lak dees way."

"I'm picking and choosing for you now, Talk-a-heap," returned the scout sharply. "Don't try to throw yourself off, or you'll be sorry."

Pulling the reins over the cayuse's head, the scout led the animal out through the boulders and down the rough slope to level ground. There he halted to mount behind his prisoner.

"How long will it take those reds to get to the place where Yellow Horse is keeping the prisoners?" he asked.

"Mabeso one hour," was the gloomy response of the half-breed. "Dey go an' dey come in one hour."

"Good!" exclaimed the scout, and pointed the cayuse for the timber that edged the river.

Scarcely had he passed into the screen of brush and trees when a voice greeted him.

"On-she-ma-da, ne'arnis! What sort of a move do you call that?"

Pawnee Bill, leading Bear Paw, rode up alongside the scout.

"It was about the only move I could make, Pawnee," Buffalo Bill answered.

"You didn't give us the signal to come on, did you?"

"No."

"I was waiting with the Crows, all ready to take a hand. I didn't see the signal, but so much happened, and so quickly, that I didn't know but you had given it and I had failed to see it."

"I didn't give it."

"What was your game, Pard Bill?"

"Why, to keep the rest of those reds thinking I was Masta Shella. As long as they are sure of that, their prisoners will be safe—at least temporarily."

"The half-breed must have discovered that you are not Masta Shella."

"Naturally. That's why I had to run off with him. If I'd left him behind, you see, he'd have tipped off our trump card to the Sioux. Then the fat would have been in the fire."

"Where did the reds go?"

"They went after Yellow Horse. I sent them."

"You sent them?"

"I played up that misunderstanding the Sioux had with Masta Shella and Broken Arrow, the time Holcomb's wagon train was attacked on the way to the Musselshell. I led them to believe that I was Masta Shella, and that I



was afraid they'd treat me as they had treated Broken Arrow. They insisted that they were friends. I pretended not to believe them and told them they'd have to get Yellow Horse before I came out of the rocks and had any confidence in their pretensions. So," and here the scout laughed, "they rushed away to get their chief."

"They'll be back——"

"Not for an hour yet, so Talk-a-heap says."

"Well, when they do come, and find you're not on the top of that rock pile, they'll begin to think they were fooled."

"I expect that."

"But what's the use of it all, necarnis? You'll have to diagram this out for me. If you wanted to fool them before, why don't you want to keep on fooling them?"

"For the reason that we are going to try and effect a rescue of Miss Holcomb, the baron and Newt Jerson."

"When——"

"When the reds come back with Yellow Horse, to avow their friendly intentions and get me out from among the rocks. If the seven come back with the chief, that will leave only part of their number to look after the prisoners. You and I and the Crows, I believe, will be able to get the prisoners away from the small number of Sioux left with them without much trouble—possibly without any trouble."

"By my medicine," murmured Pawnee Bill, "but that's a clever dodge. There's only one place in your scheme that looks doubtful to me, necarnis."

"What place is that?"

"Why, you don't know where the prisoners are."

"That's what we're now going to find out."

"How?"

The scout laid hold of Talk-a-heap and tipped him off the cayuse.

"This half-breed's going to tell us, Pawnee," he answered sternly.

## CHAPTER IX.

### TALK-A-HEAP TALKS.

Talk-a-heap flopped over on his back as he fell from the horse and lay staring up at the scout and the bowie man.

"By the sacred O-zu-ha!" muttered Pawnee Bill, "this fellow's face is enough to hang him. He's the worst-looking ki-yi I've seen in these parts."

"He's just as tough as he looks," said the scout. "Look here, Talk-a-heap," he added.

Then while the half-breed watched him closely Buffalo Bill removed the yellow-haired wig, stripped away

the army blouse and the overalls, and stood out in his regulation gear.

"Roll those things up and stuff them in your saddlebags, Pawnee," went on the scout.

The prince of the bowie began arranging the make-up in a compact bundle and stowing them in his war bag. The scout, while this was going on, had stepped to the side of the half-breed.

"If there were any doubts in your mind about my being Pa-e-has-ka," said he, "I reckon they're about gone, by this time. I'm Buffalo Bill, the man who does what he says he's going to. Now, listen. My pard and I are out here with some Crow scouts to rescue Miss Holcomb, my Dutch pard, and Newt Jerson. 'We're going to get them; savvy? What's more, you're going to help us get them. If the three prisoners, or any one of them, suffer harm at the hands of Yellow Horse, we're going to send you over the one-way trail.'

"You no keel me for wat Yellow Horse do to dose pris'ner?" returned Talk-a-heap, in a panic.

"You heard me say so, didn't you? And didn't I tell you, a moment ago, that Buffalo Bill's word was as good as his bond?"

"By gee-krips! How I was gone help wat Yellow Horse do?"

"I'll tell you. The only way you can save your hair is by telling us what we can do to save the prisoners. Will you answer my questions?"

"Yaes, I spik w'at you want, but me, I no wan' to be keel."

"How did Yellow Horse know Miss Holcomb was coming from Custer?"

"Wael," answered Talk-a-heap shiftily, "he find him out."

"How?"

"I was at de fort, an' I hear de talk 'bout de gal when she come, an' when she gone start for Benton."

"Then you got away from Custer ahead of her and told Yellow Horse and his gang about it?"

"Yaes."

"Yellow Horse was quick to take up your scheme?"

"I brav' mans, Pa-e-has-ka; I——"

"Pah!" muttered Pawnee Bill disgustedly.

"I save de pris'ners' lives."

"How did you save the prisoners' lives?"

"I spik to dose mans Yellow Horse. He was gone keel all de pris'ners. I say, 'No keel, mak' pris'ner; den we trade pris'ner for Masta Shella.' So dat ees w'at we do, an' de pris'ners lives ees save'."

"It was your scheme to trade the prisoners for Masta Shella?"

"Yaes. I blame sharp mans, sharp as de steel trap, yaes."



"Where did you capture the prisoners?"

"In de gully, 'bout twelve-fifteen mile on de Custer trail."

"Were any of the prisoners hurt at the time of the capture?"

"Nah. De Sioux Injun scare de horses in de gully. Fat yellow eyes hees horse ees mule, an' de mule turn de back han'spring. Before de fat mans he ees wake up, he ees tied. De gal she fall from de horse w'at she ride, an' we catch her easy. Dat Newt Jerson, he come hard, but we hit him with a club gun. Den he come not so hard. No one ees bad hurt."

"You made the girl write that letter?"

"Yaes," and a look of pride ran through the villainous face of the half-breed, "dat ees my work. Me, I think of him."

"You came to Benton and shot the arrow with the letter?"

There was more pride in the scoundrel's face.

"Yaes, Pa-e-has-ka, I do dat, too."

"Where did Yellow Horse take the prisoners?"

"Into de hills."

"Where?"

"I no can tell w'ere, by gee-krips. Him hard place to find, heap hard to tell."

"He's beginning to play off on you, necarnis," spoke up the bowie man.

"Cover him, Pawnee."

Buffalo Bill lifted the half-breed to his bound feet and stood him against a tree. The prince of the bowie, leveling the revolver, peered at the scoundrel over the sights.

Talk-a-heap's face contorted with terror.

"Don' keel, don' shoot!" clamored the half-breed.

"Where are the prisoners?" demanded the scout sternly.

"I take you dere, yaes, I show de way. It ees hard to tell. I sp'ak good English, but she is hard to tell."

The scout nodded for Pawnee Bill to lower his revolver.

"Does Yellow Horse intend to injure his prisoners?" the scout went on.

"Masta Shella no come, den he keel de pris'ners," answered Talk-a-heap. "Injun dey t'ink Masta Shella come. Injun git fooled. I sharp mans, I no get fooled."

"Yellow Horse, thinking I am Masta Shella, will not injure the prisoners until he finds out that I am not Masta Shella."

"Yaes, by gee-krips. You got him right, Pa-e-has-ka."

"You see, Pawnee?" remarked the scout, turning to the bowie man. "It all depended on how we fooled the reds into thinking I was Masta Shella."

"Good business!" exclaimed the prince of the bowie.

"Yellow Horse was to kill the prisoners in case Masta

Shella did not come to Cheyenne Hill?" went on the scout, addressing the half-breed.

"Yaes. De pris'ners was to be keel right away, if Masta Shella him no come."

"Where are the Crows, Pawnee?" inquired the scout.

"Back a ways in the chaparral," answered the bowie man.

"What did you find out while you were scouting?"

"We found where the Sioux were keeping Jerson."

"Jerson?"

"Yes. He's half a dozen miles from here in a pocket in a side hill."

"Where are the other two prisoners?"

"Pass the ante, necarnis. They weren't with Jerson. Six reds were guarding the guide."

The scout whirled on Talk-a-heap.

"You hear that?" he demanded.

"Yaes," was the answer.

"The prisoners have been separated."

"No cumtux. Dey was not divide w'en we start for de Cheyenne Hill to meet Masta Shella."

"How many braves has Yellow Horse got with him?"

"He got so many now"—Talk-a-heap held up both hands, then two fingers—"bymby he got so many," and, with that, he pushed both hands awkwardly upward.

In order to signify the number of warriors, the half-breed, who was on his feet, had to turn half around so that he could manipulate his bound hands.

"He's got a dozen now," translated the scout.

"Just what Miss Holcomb said in her note," observed the bowie man.

"Talk-a-heap dictated the note, Pawnee, so we have to prove a good deal of its information. Yellow Horse, if the breed is to be believed, is to have fifty warriors, after a while."

"They're some of the gang that attacked the wagon train."

"Must be."

The scout again turned to Talk-a-heap.

"When are more of the reds to join Yellow Horse?" he asked.

"When Masta Shella ees loose," was the reply.

"What do the reds want of Masta Shella, anyhow?"

"Masta Shella him all same friend Rain-in-de-face. Him help save Rain-in-de-face one time at Lincoln."

"That's Holcomb's yarn," put in Pawnee Bill. "Holcomb vows that this Masta Shella is one of the two grain thieves who were imprisoned in the guardhouse at Fort Lincoln at the same time Rain-in-the-face was there. The grain thieves sawed a hole in the guardhouse and got away, and Rain-in-the-face helped himself to the hole."

"I believe all that has been sufficiently proved, Pawnee. Masta Shella won the friendship of the whole Sioux Nation by helping Rain-in-the-face."



Once more the scout turned to Talk-a-heap.

"Yellow Horse and his warriors were not on very good terms with Masta Shella," said he, "at the time Masta Shella was captured."

"Nah," said Talk-a-heap. "Masta Shella him liked by all de Sioux. When de Pah-sap-pah (Black Hills) Sioux dey hear dat Masta Shella has been made pris'ner, den dey send word to Yellow Horse, 'You no come back without dat Masta Shella; you get keel you come back without dat Masta Shella.' So Yellow Horse he try get Masta Shella."

"I'm beginning to understand this layout," said the scout. "Yellow Horse and his war party may be at outs with Masta Shella, but their people, back in the Pah-sap-pah, won't have any harm happen to him if they can help it. So they have put it up to Yellow Horse to bring Masta Shella back, or suffer the consequences. This accounts for the present hostility of the Sioux, when we had them beaten. Now——"

A distant thump of pony hoofs reached the ears of the pard. Pawnee Bill jumped to the undergrowth, pushed it aside, and looked out toward Cheyenne Hill.

"On-she-ma-da, necarnis!" he exclaimed, turning away. "The Sioux are back, and they're bringing Yellow Horse. They're slashing for that ridge where you stood off the seven."

"No time to lose, then," said the scout. "Bring up the Crows in a rush, Pawnee."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CAVE IN THE CANON.

Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and the Crows worked swiftly and silently. It was the scout's purpose, if possible, to rescue all the prisoners before Yellow Horse could return to them from Cheyenne Hill. In order to do that, the scout's force must strike, and strike quickly.

In this the excellence of the scout's reasoning when telling his plans to Holcomb was clearly apparent.

A force of troopers, good fighters though the veterans were, was vastly inferior to the scout's Crows, as led by Pawnee Bill.

The Crows, with the pards at their head, could swoop from point to point, strike their blows and be away again before the Sioux had knowledge of their actions.

But there was one point that troubled the scout.

From Pawnee Bill's discoveries, that morning, it appeared that the prisoners had been separated. To go to the place where Talk-a-heap was to guide them, and rescue the girl and the baron, then to go to the pocket and rescue Newt Jerson, made double work. Double work took more time; and more time might give the

Sioux a chance to get back to either place before the scout and his force had accomplished their work.

These reflections, although disquieting, did not prevent the scout from hurrying to carry out his plans.

Talk-a-heap's horse had been lost at the time of the prisoner's capture, but the scout still had the Roman-nosed cayuse which he had ridden from the fort.

The half-breed's feet were unbound, he was made to mount the cayuse, and then his feet were bound again under the animal's body.

The scout, on Bear Paw, and Pawnee Bill, on his war horse, Chick-Chick, rode on either side of Talk-a-heap, their riatas encircling the cayuse's neck.

For the half-breed's convenience in riding and guiding, his hands were freed; but he was as much a prisoner as ever, being constantly under the watchful eyes of the two pards. The five Crows rode behind, active and alert as bloodhounds.

The scout took a look for himself at the side of Cheyenne Hill, just before starting away.

The Sioux were riding their peace signs within easy pistol shot of the spur where he had been holed away with his half-breed prisoner.

They could not see Masta Shella and the half-breed, but they must have been under the impression that they were still there.

Smothering a laugh, the scout turned away.

"What's up?" queried the bowie man.

"Start yourself, Talk-a-heap," said the scout, jumping into his saddle. "What's more, if you put any value on that scalp of yours get over the ground for a record. We've got to rescue the girl before the Sioux chief and his outfit get to where we're going."

"I go queek," answered Talk-a-heap, and struck the cayuse with his heels.

The horse jumped away, and Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill kept a pace that held them alongside the prisoner.

"Why, Pawnee," observed the scout, as they rode, "Yellow Horse and his bucks are under the impression that I am still in that nest of boulders on top of the ridge. They're cutting up their peace didoes and trying hard to make me show myself."

The bowie man laughed.

"You've buffaloeed them to the queen's taste, necarnis," said he. "It was a clever play—the only play that could have saved the prisoners."

Talk-a-heap was conning a course that followed the river bank, and kept the whole party well within the screen of the timber. They were working upstream, and they kept their ponies at a gallop. The timber was scanty and there was not enough undergrowth to interfere with their rapid passage.

"The point that bothers me," said the scout, "is the one you developed."

"Which was that?"



"Why, the separating of the prisoners. You discovered Jerson holed away in a pocket. That means that Yellow Horse, for some purpose of his own, has divided his captives. Jerson is in one place, and Miss Holcomb and the baron are in another. We've got to make both places before the reds get away from Cheyenne Hill—and the pocket may be at a considerable distance from the place to which Talk-a-heap is taking us."

"Don't lose sight of the fact, necarnis, that the reds, when they leave Cheyenne Hill, will go only to one place."

"They might divide their force and send a part to each place."

"What will Yellow Horse think when he fails to find the supposed Masta Shella at Cheyenne Hill?"

"He may think he has been fooled."

"And start at once to put the prisoners out of the way?"

"That is more than possible."

"Then wouldn't he be apt to go to the place where Miss Holcomb and the baron were left? The girl's his most important prisoner."

"Check. You've got that dead to rights, Pawnee."

"I can't figure," went on Pawnee Bill, "why Yellow Horse should scatter his prisoners around like that. It compels him to divide his own force in order to furnish guards, and we know, and he must know, that it is a tactical blunder to diminish a small force in the face of a stronger force of the enemy."

"He don't know how large a force we've got," and the scout turned a grim backward look at the five Crow scouts.

"He knows that he has stirred up the whole post with that letter which was shot into officers' row on the arrow. Naturally, he'll figure on having all the soldiers at Benton on his track."

"I reckon he will, Pawnee, and his plan, it seems to me, is to bother the soldiers by making them look in two different places for the prisoners. He knows the soldiers will be after him, even if Colonel Weatherby could be clubbed into setting Masta Shella at liberty."

"He must know the soldiers would be after him harder than ever with Masta Shella free to kick up more ructions in the Indian country."

"That's why he's dividing his prisoners. He don't intend to release them because Masta Shella is released. That was a cinch, right from the start. Now——"

The scout broke off suddenly. While his conversation with Pawnee Bill was proceeding, Talk-a-heap had guided them out of the timber and across a bare stretch of ground that sloped steadily upward.

At the top of this rise was a chaparral of trees and bushes, cutting the sky line sharply.

"What now, Talk-a-heap?" demanded the scout.

"We come close to de place, Pa-e-has-ka," answered the half-breed. "You see dose brush?" he queried, pointing upward.

"Yes."

"Dere we stop. You do de rest on foot. You tell me dis, Pa-e-haska."

"What?"

"If you save de white squaw, an' de odder two pris'ner, den I go free?"

"You go free, yes."

"Good! Me, I do w'at I can, you bet."

"That's a sensible way of looking at it. The better you do, Talk-a-heap, the safer you'll be. You're a coyote, if there ever was one, but you're entitled to consideration if you help us rescue the prisoners."

Reaching the chaparral, they pushed into it and then halted suddenly. Breaking sheer away from under their horses' front feet was a dizzy gulf. The lip of the chasm was level with the ground, and, on a dark night, it would have been possible for a man to tumble over the brink to his doom in the depths below.

Perhaps the gulf measured a hundred feet from rim rock to rim rock, and a hundred feet from rim rock to bottom. It extended north and south, curving into a sort of bow shape at the ends and vanishing from the pards' eyes.

"Down dere is de place, Pa-e-has-ka," said the half-breed, pointing.

"I can't see any sign of reds in the bottom of the cañon."

"You see dose white rock?"

The scout, straining his eyes, was able to see the rock.

"Yes," he answered.

"Dat ees by de cave in de cañon. Him ole Cheyenne Cave. Dere ees w'ere de pris'ner was lef'."

"How do we get down?"

"De Injun dey ride up cañon, but me, I was sharp mans. I no breeng you up de cañon for fear we meet dose Injun mans. You get down by de rope, first to dat leetle shelf, den to de next place at de bottom. Always you use de rope."

"We'll commence at once," declared the scout, slipping from his saddle. "There's no time to throw at the birds."

Talk-a-heap was left on the Roman-nosed cayuse, but his hands were firmly lashed at his back and he was put in charge of Spotted Wolf. Nahkee, by virtue of being the best hand player, was leader of the Crows. To him the scout, in curt, sharp words, emphasized the fact that the half-breed was to be treated considerably while on his good behavior.

The pards' riatas were spliced together. The Crows happened to have ropes, and four of these were spliced onto the pards' riatas. When this work was done, one end of the spliced cable was fastened securely to a boulder



at the rim of the cañon, and the other end was dropped downward. It struck the shelf, midway of the cliff, and the free end lay there.

The scout and the bowie man pulled off their boots and threw aside their coats and hats. Their belts and guns they took with them.

The scout was first to descend. Hanging to the rope and planting his feet against the rocky wall, he made the descent easily to the shelf. There he cast downward the rest of the rope and presently gained the bottom of the cañon. Pawnee Bill followed close behind him.

They were less than a dozen feet from the white rock indicated by Talk-a-heap. At the side of the rock was a black opening leading into the bosom of the cliff.

"There are probably some reds on guard inside that hole," whispered the bowie man.

"We'll creep in on them," answered the scout. "We'll have a big advantage if we can take them by surprise."

Passing to the side of the cavern entrance, Buffalo Bill dropped to his knees and began worming his stealthy way into the blank darkness. Pawnee Bill crawled along at his heels.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A TIGHT SQUEAK.

The scout knew nothing about Cheyenne Cave. He had never even heard the place mentioned until Talk-a-heap had described it as the place where the prisoners had been left by Yellow Horse.

All was stygian gloom before the scout as he crawled onward. Now and again he could feel Pawnee's out-reaching hands touching his heels. Whatever happened, the bowie man was right behind to take part in it.

Suddenly the scout heard a voice—a familiar voice splitting through the opaque darkness.

"Look a leedle oudt, whoefer you vas! Der rets haf got deir guns——"

There came the sound of a blow and sudden silence on the part of the speaker. The baron, for unquestionably it was Villum von Schnitzenhauser, had been roughly silenced.

"Flat down, Pawnee!" whispered the scout sharply; "flat down!"

Both pards sprawled close to the rocky floor of the cave. Hardly had they done so when lurid flashes broke out of the gloom beyond, and a deafening roar and a smell of burnt powder filled the underground chamber.

"At them!" cried the scout, regaining his feet.

How many enemies there were in front of them the pards had no means of knowing; the scout guessed, figuring from the fact that there were twelve in the original party, that there could be no more than three. Count-

ing the half-breed, there had been eight at Cheyenne Hill; the half-breed was a prisoner and out of the count, and Yellow Horse was now at the hill. That would leave three in the cave. But the warriors guarding Jerson in the pocket—where had they come from?

So, everything considered, there was much doubt as to the force facing the pards. But there was nothing else for it than to make front on them. Nor did they dare to do any shooting. Miss Holcomb and the baron might suffer.

Side by side the scout and the bowie man rushed toward the place where they had seen the flashes. By lying flat on the cavern floor they had escaped the bullets. If their foes had muzzle-loading rifles, the pards would be upon them before they could reload—perhaps before they would have time to use their revolvers, in case they were supplied with such small arms.

Buffalo Bill ran into a flinty fist. The blow caught him in the shoulder and whirled him half around. He was facing the other way again, however, swift as lightning, and had hurled himself upon his unseen antagonist. The Indian gave a grunt as he was flung to the hard floor. But he had not been dazed, or crippled, and he wriggled clear and pulled from the scout's grasp into the gloom.

Pawnee Bill had scarcely any better luck. Some hidden hand struck at him with a knife. The knife bit into his coat, just grazing the skin of his shoulder. He struck out with his fist and felt, rather than saw, the form before him reel backward.

After that there was silence—but only for a minute. It was startlingly broken by a clatter of unshod hoofs pounding the cavern floor.

"They're off!" yelled Pawnee Bill.

The scout whirled around just in time to see the last Sioux, mounted, silhouetted in the cave opening. The next instant the Sioux had vanished.

"Dot makes no nefer minds," came the voice of the baron. "Dey vas gone und I vas resgued. Himmel-blitzen, vat a habbiness!"

"Is that you, baron?" asked the scout.

"Shiminy grickeds! Oof it ain'd der sgout!" and, with that, the baron went off into a spasm of talk suggesting his joy at this unexpected meeting.

Guiding himself by the sound of the baron's voice, the scout made his way to his side and bent down.

"We've got to get out of here in a hurry, baron," said he, "and we haven't any time for useless talk. Where's Miss Holcomb?"

"She don'd vas in der gave, Puffalo Pill," came the surprising response.

"Not in the cave?" echoed the scout, taken aback.

"Nein. She vas took away mit dot Cherson feller."

"When?"

"Dis morgen alretty."



"You all spent the night in the cave?"

"Yah, so."

"And Jerson and Miss Holcomb were taken away early this forenoon?"

"Dot's der vay oof it."

"A beastly run of luck!" He lifted his voice. "Do you hear that, Pawnee?"

"I should say! All the prisoners were separated and taken to different places. I've found the baron's mule, but there don't seem to be any other animals here."

"The reds took their ponies when they left. How many of the reds were in here, baron?"

"Two, dot's all. Dey saw you ven you come greeping droo der hole, und dey vas gedding retty to shoot ven I called oudt aboutt—"

"I'll turn you loose, and then we'll get out of here. Those two reds will meet Yellow Horse and his outfit, returning from Cheyenne Hill, and tell them what's been going on in the cave. The chances are about even whether Yellow Horse comes on here or goes to the place where Miss Holcomb was taken. In any event, we shall have to work, and work quick."

Swiftly the scout freed the baron of the ropes that bound him; then, lighting matches, he went around the cave in order to make sure that the girl was not there. There was a possibility, a bare possibility, that the baron had been mistaken.

Miss Holcomb, however, was not to be found. While the scout was prosecuting his fruitless search, the baron had picked up his riding gear and had saddled and bridled Toofer.

"You can't take the mule, baron," said Pawnee Bill, suddenly discovering what the baron was up to.

"For vy nod?" demanded the baron.

"Why, we're going up on a rope, the same as we came down. You'll have to go with us."

"Und leaf dot Toofer mu-el pehindt for der Inchuns?" howled the baron, in wild protest. "Nix, I bed you. I would radder ged skeluped."

Before Pawnee Bill or Buffalo Bill could stop him he had vaulted into the saddle and rushed Toofer through the entrance to the cave.

"The baron's liable to spoil everything," growled Pawnee Bill. "If he takes the mule, he'll have to get out by the bottom of the cañon, and——"

"Hist!" interrupted the scout. "The baron has run into something already."

"Inchuns! Inchuns!" the baron was yelping wildly from the cañon.

The pards dashed out of the gloom. Down the cañon they could see the Sioux hostiles chasing at speed in the direction of the cave. Yellow Horse was in the lead and was plying his quirt like mad.

"Good!" said the scout.

"How's that?" demanded Pawnee Bill, following as the scout rushed toward the rope.

"Why, Yellow Horse is coming this way instead of making for the place where Miss Holcomb was taken. That gives us a little time in which to look for the girl."

"Keno!"

"Leave that mule, baron," ordered the scout, "and take to the rope with Pawnee and me."

"Nefer!" bawled the baron. "Toofer can show his heels to any Inchun ponies vat iss on der eart', and der mu-el iss der apple oof my eye! I vill shday mit Toofer!"

Thereupon the baron dug in and set Toofer at his best pace the other way along the cañon.

There was no time to argue matters with the baron. Even if there had been, to overtake him was impossible.

"Let him go," said the scout, laying hold of the rope and beginning to climb. "We'll have a tighter squeak of it getting clear of the cañon than the baron will have. Ah!" he added, as a sputter of shots came from the rim rock; "the Crows are taking hold."

"Bully for the Absarokes!" applauded Pawnee Bill.

Simultaneously with the firing from above, the spliced rope began to rush upward over the lip of the cañon, snatching both pards along with it.

"Hang on for your life, Pawnee!" roared the scout, spinning and whirling with the motion imparted to the rope by the drawing force overhead. "They've hitched a horse to the rope and are snaking us out of the gulch."

There was no opportunity for talk, after that. Both pards were put to it to keep themselves from being thrown off the rope by the jutting rocks, but they managed to hold on until the rim rock was reached. Then, quickly, the pulling horse was halted and Nahkee reached down and gave the scout a hand over the ledge. Pawnee Bill came next, and the two pards, dizzy from their swinging and gyrating, staggered onto level ground and toward their horses.

"Who did that?" demanded the scout, looking at Spotted Wolf, who was busy untying the end of the spliced ropes from Bear Paw's saddle.

"Me," answered Nahkee. "Heap fine Injun, huh?"

"Heap fine," said the scout.

"You gib um Nahkee plug tobac'?"

"When we get through with our work, yes; two plugs tobac'."

Once inside his boots, coat, and hat, and in the saddle, his whirling brain somewhat steadied, the scout rode close to the rim and looked down. The Sioux were just disappearing around a bend in the cañon, in hot pursuit of the baron.

"We've got to do something for the baron," said the scout. "Bring the half-breed, Nahkee. This way, Pawnee, on the run."

Following the cañon's rim, the scout pushed Bear Paw at best speed through the chaparral.



## CHAPTER XII.

## UNEXPECTED LUCK.

Keeping up with the baron in his race along the bottom of the cañon was an impossibility for the pards and the Crow scouts. The baron had a good start, for while the pards were being snaked upward to the top of the cañon wall, Toofer had been pounding into the distance with his master.

A few minutes after starting the pursuit, Buffalo Bill was halted by a gully that ran into the cañon at right angles. The gully was wide and deep, and it was necessary to make a detour to get around it.

"The baron can't expect any further help from us," said the scout. "He'll have to wriggle clear of his difficulties, now, as best he can. If Toofer is in an agreeable frame of mind, and willing to do his best, he can run away from those Sioux cayuses.

Buffalo Bill had started Bear Paw along the brink of the gully, hoping to discover a place where the break could be crossed. The outlook was not promising, and he reined in and waited for Pawnee Bill, the Crows, and the prisoner to come close.

"We've got to move in a hurry if we save the girl," said the scout.

"And the worst of it is, necarnis," added the bowie man, "we don't know which way to move."

"Talk-a-heap," said the scout, facing the half-breed, "have you any idea where Yellow Horse would take Miss Holcomb?"

"Nah," was the gloomy response. "Yellow Horse him lak de fox. Me, I dunno."

"Think hard. Remember, you do not secure your liberty unless we rescue all the prisoners."

"I t'ink so hard as I can, but I dunno. By gee-krips, I was gone duck, I bet."

There was not the least doubt but that Talk-a-heap had reached the end of his rope. He was anxious to impart further information, for his liberty depended on it, but he had none to impart.

"It's up to us, necarnis," said Pawnee Bill gloomily, "and to go at it by guess and by gosh, in these hills, is like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"There's only one bet left, Pawnee, and that is to go to that pocket where Yellow Horse sent Jerson."

"The girl isn't there."

"I understand that, but it is possible that somewhere between this cañon and the pocket the girl may be found. How far away is the pocket? Can you give an estimate?"

Pawnee Bill lifted himself in his stirrups. East by north, dim in the distance, could be seen the top of Cheyenne Hill. From that uplift he was able to get his bearings.

Drawing an imaginary line with his eyes directly to the west of Cheyenne Hill, he encountered the crest of a sugar-loaf uplift; thence his glance came slowly toward

the gully, halting at a bunch of timber in the middle distance.

"See those trees, necarnis?" he inquired, pointing.

"Yes," answered Buffalo Bill.

"To the right of the trees is a rock pile. The pocket is in the side of the low slope."

"Jupiter!" exclaimed the scout. "That's only a five-minute trip from here, at slow pace."

"Just about."

"If Jerson is there, then it's a cinch he didn't travel far in distributing his prisoners. We'll set out for the pocket."

They headed their horses away from the gully. As they rode, Crooked Foot and Nahkee took charge of Talk-a-heap, riding on either side of him with their ropes about the neck of the Roman-nosed cayuse.

Pawnee Bill had coiled in his riata, unspliced from the cable used for getting into the cañon, and the scout had done the same with his own rope.

"We didn't have time for much of a palaver with the baron," remarked Pawnee Bill, who was stirrup to stirrup with the scout.

"The Sioux wouldn't stand for it," laughed the scout. "We have another chance to find Miss Holcomb, and the baron is giving it to us."

"You mean that he'll keep Yellow Horse and his reds occupied while we're hunting?"

"Yes."

"Then, necarnis, here's hoping that the baron shows the reds his heels, but that he doesn't do it so quickly as to put them off his track before we're done with our part of the work."

Another gully, or, rather, a sort of pass through a low ridge, intercepted the pards and their red allies at this point.

As was usual, in that part of the country, boulders littered the pass, but they were not so formidable as to prevent a safe and speedy crossing to the other side.

The scout was on the point of spurring Bear Paw over the brink of the slope when a patter of hoofs from the west drew his attention.

Spotted Wolf had been scouting a little on the flanks, and he was now sliding back toward the main party, silent, but flourishing his hands to indicate that there was something of importance on his mind.

"Wait a minute, necarnis," called Pawnee Bill. "Spotted Wolf has got onto something."

Buffalo Bill drew Bear Paw back from the edge of the descent and waited until Spotted Wolf came close. The Indian, at close inspection, could be seen to be tremendously excited. There was a wild glimmer in his little black eyes, and the heave of his bare, brown breast was quick and sharp.

"Cutthroats!" he announced.

"Sioux!" exclaimed the scout. "Where?"



Spotted Wolf stretched out his arm to the westward, then, lowering his hand, he pointed to the pass and let his finger travel toward the east.

"All same come along coulee, Pa-e-has-ka," he announced.

"How many?"

Spotted Wolf held up four fingers.

"One Injun all same Yellow Horse," he announced.

"On-she-ma-da!" muttered Pawnee Bill.

"Here's luck—just when we needed it most," said the scout. "You're sure you saw the chief, Spotted Wolf?"

"Heap sure. Him ride ahead. Other Injun 'way behind um. Heap quick Cutthroats pass um Pa-e-has-ka."

"Lis'en!" spoke up Nahkee.

Far to the westward, faint but unmistakable, came the flippity-flip of a pony's hoofs.

The scout leaped from the saddle and snatched his coiled riata.

"Come on, Pawnee," he called. "On the jump, now. Bring your rope. Nahkee, keep the Crows back and out of sight. Don't let Talk-a-heap make a sound. Savvy?"

"Wuh!"

Buffalo Bill slid over the edge of the slope and down among the boulders. The bottom of the pass was fairly clear of the stones, and that would be the course traveled by the Sioux chief. With keen, alert eyes he swiftly selected a point of vantage for himself and Pawnee Bill.

"Down here, Pawnee," said the scout, dropping behind a boulder.

This boulder was flanked by another stone which would hide the pards from the view of any one coming up the pass from the west.

"What's the program?" inquired Pawnee Bill, cool as ever when a crisis was at hand.

"We've captured Talk-a-heap, and now there's a chance to lay Yellow Horse by the heels. By doing that, we'll perhaps save Miss Holcomb. In any event, it seems the proper thing for us to do now that the prospect is so inviting."

"Correct. Why the ropes?"

"I want you to throw the chief's pony. Do that, Pawnee, and I'll take care of the chief."

"How about the three behind?"

"We'll have to leave them for the Crows to pick. Ah, he's coming!"

Around the flanking boulder Buffalo Bill, at that moment, caught a glimpse of Yellow Horse. He was riding briskly, his face, streaked with yellow war paint, looking particularly hideous. He carried a lance, a bunch of feathers fluttering from just below the head of it.

Yellow Horse was a weird figure as he came slashing along the pass. His savage expression was the result, no doubt, of his thoughts. Pa-e-has-ka had raided his cave and released one of the prisoners. Very likely he

was hurrying off to make sure that the other two prisoners were not released.

"Ready?" whispered the scout.

"Ready's whole family, necarnis," chuckled the bowie man, likewise known to those best acquainted with him as the rope wizard. "Consider that Sioux cayuse thrown."

The coiled rope was in Pawnee Bill's left hand, and the noose in his right. He was spreading the noose a little wider and shuffling the loose, free coils back and forth in his fingers. Meanwhile, his hawklike glance never for an instant left the approaching chief.

"I can't do my work until you do yours," whispered the scout.

"Before you can count twenty, necarnis, my work will be done."

At the proper moment, timing himself by the plunkety-plunk of the unshod hoofs, the magician of the riata lifted himself suddenly. A whirl of the noose, and it shot outward, wriggling like a hempen serpent along the ground.

Yellow Horse saw his peril, but too late. The noose snared the cayuse by the right forward hoof. Jumping to the top of the boulder, Pawnee Bill planted himself firmly.

An instant more and the slack was taken up. Pawnee Bill, although badly jolted, held to his place, and the Sioux cayuse fell scrambling.

Yellow Horse had had time to gather himself for the shock. As the pony fell, he shot clear of the animal's back and alighted on his feet on the ground.

The scout was around the boulder and upon him. With a fierce whoop, Yellow Horse, who still retained hold of his lance, aimed a vicious blow with it at the scout.

Pawnee Bill gave a yell as he lay back on the rope. At the same moment, Buffalo Bill caught the lance and wrested it out of the chief's hand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE MISSING PRISONER.

With the lance in his own hands, Buffalo Bill made use of it as a club. Yellow Horse was reaching for another weapon when the haft of the lance descended with terrific force on his head. The blow staggered him, but his skull was thick and he kept his feet with the agility of a cat. He was dazed a little, however, and the scout grappled with him and bore him down.

While they writhed and struggled in the bottom of the pass, the other three redskins had paused, undecided whether to go to their chief's aid or to remain where they were. Pawnee Bill, having finished his roping, made his way along the riata to the chief's horse, cast off the noose, and jumped on the animal's back.



Using his spurs, he charged the three warriors, a revolver in each hand. The dashing charge was too much for the braves to withstand. They fired a round with their rifles—a round that was futile—and turned tail and made at speed in the other direction.

But they had delayed retreat too long for their own good.

Nahkee, using his head in a way rather surprising in a redskin, had marshaled himself, Crooked Foot, and Spotted Wolf in the pass below the three Sioux.

There was a crack of guns, and one of the Sioux dropped from his pony's back. The other two, caught between two fires, continued their desperate retreat.

One of them got past the Crows. The other was knocked from his horse, and Pawnee Bill came up just in the nick of time to save the man's life. One reeking scalp had already been snatched from the head of a fallen warrior, and Crooked Foot and Spotted Wolf were envious and eager to star themselves as Nahkee had done.

Under Pawnee Bill's supervision the captured warrior was bound. His weapons were taken from him by the disappointed Crows, and the prisoner was then put back on his horse and secured there.

The prince of the bowie led the horse and the captive back along the pass to where the king of scouts had just finished roping Yellow Horse.

"He gave me a tussle," remarked the scout, "but I got him. Do you want to save your life, Yellow Horse?" the scout asked.

The chief's reply was a defiant stare.

"You can keep your scalp," went on the scout, "if you will tell me where you have put the white squaw."

A sneering smile crossed the painted visage of the chief.

"Kill um Yellow Horse," said he; "him no tell."

There was no doubt but the chief was an altogether different man to deal with than Talk-a-heap. Yellow Horse placed a light value on his own life, when he came to buying it at what he probably considered the expense of his honor.

Pawnee Bill watched the other brave keenly. He seemed to be vastly interested in the fate of the chief.

"If Yellow Horse won't speak," called the prince of the bowie, giving the scout a significant look, "shoot him."

The scout, unable to understand just what the bowie man was trying to get at, nevertheless leveled a revolver at the breast of the prostrate chief.

Yellow Horse spat contemptuously at the threatening muzzle.

"Me no squaw!" he snarled. "Shoot."

The scout, to all appearances, was ready to snuff out the chief's life. At the critical moment, when his finger seemed flexing on the trigger, the other prisoner gave a shout.

"No shoot um!" he cried. "Me give um back white squaw."

A grim smile crossed Pawnee Bill's face.

"That's about what I thought, necarnis," said he. "This other buck is more worried about the chief than the chief is about himself. Ha! Listen to that."

Yellow Horse turned loose a torrent of scorching Sioux talk on the warrior. The scout and the bowie man understood a little of the talk, gathering, among other things, that the Sioux brave was named White Panther.

White Panther stolidly withstood the rage of his chief. His determination was in no wise shaken.

"You no kill um Yellow Horse," said he, to the scout, "me give um back white squaw."

Yellow horse relapsed into silence. Nahkee came up the pass, just then, flinging the Sioux scalp high and catching it first in one hand and then in the other. As he juggled with the gruesome relic he sang the songs of his people for such cases made and provided. Crooked Foot and Spotted Wolf followed behind, one leading the pony of the slain Sioux, and both possessed of the property stripped from the dead savage and from the living captive.

"Stop that confounded foolishness, Nahkee," cried the scout, "and bring the other two Crows and the half-breed down here. We're going after the other two prisoners."

Nahkee tucked the scalp carefully under his belt, then started up the slope. The other two, leaving the pony behind, followed him. Presently they reappeared on their mounts, with the other two Crows, and descended into the pass.

While they were gone, the two Bills had been lifting Yellow Horse to his pony's back and tying him there. When the party again started, they were top-heavy with prisoners. There were three, leaving two men to guard each one and the scout to ride on ahead.

White Panther, in the lead, was showing the way.

They left the pass, turned north, and finally came to a creek which flowed toward the Missouri. This creek was bordered with trees, and a tumble-down cabin, which had evidently belonged on a time to some venturesome trapper, proved to be their destination.

As White Panther led the way to the ruinous old hut, something like surprise tugged at his swarthy face. Evidently something had happened which he could not understand. Both the pards noticed his preoccupied manner.

"What's the trouble, Panther?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"No savvy um," was the reply; "heap no cumtux. White squaw here while ago; no here now. Ugh!"

"She was here, was she?"

"Ai."

The scout rode to the door opening of the old cabin and dismounted. Before the door were footprints—moc-



casin prints and the marks of small shoes. The marks of a man's shoes could also be seen. It was all extremely puzzling.

Disappearing inside the cabin, the scout made a hasty search for clues. He found none.

"Find out anything, necarnis?" asked Pawnee Bill, as the scout reappeared.

"Not a thing, inside the hut," was the answer, "but here at the door are tracks a-plenty. Miss Holcomb has been here, and there were Sioux guards to look after her. Some white man has been here, too, for the prints of his boots overlay the other marks. Here, too, are the hoof-marks—a trifle faint, because the ground is harder where the horses stood. I can't make anything out of it, Pawnee, except this: The girl has been taken away."

"If the footprints of the white man overlay those of the reds, then he must have been here later—probably after the reds got away with the girl."

This from Pawnee Bill, after a brief reflection.

"Who that white man was I haven't the least notion," frowned the scout.

While he was still standing beside his horse and pondering, a thump of hoofs from near at hand, suggestive of horses suddenly spurred to action, burst suddenly on the ears of himself, Pawnee Bill, and the Crows.

The clash of hoofs was followed by shrill whoops.

"The Sioux!" roared Pawnee Bill; "they're jumping us!"

"Mitwit!" screeched the Crows; "coo-ley!" (Get up! run!).

The scout vaulted into his saddle. A flashing look around him disclosed painted forms hurling themselves out of the timber on all sides.

To get clear, cross the creek and reach more open ground was the one thing to do.

"Cast loose the prisoners!" he shouted. "After me—for your lives!"

There could be no escape, handicapped by an attempt to take away the prisoners. The scout realized this on the instant, and hence his order to set the captives adrift.

Knives slashed the ropes. There was little firing on the part of the charging redskins, presumably from the fact that they were afraid of injuring their chief, Yellow Horse. The scout, discovering this backwardness in using firearms, instantly divined the cause. Catching the chief's horse by the riding thong, the scout bore away.

Pawnee Bill and the Crows surged after him.

"Cross the creek, Pawnee!" the scout shouted. "Take the Crows across the creek. I'll be with you in less than half an hour."

The scout, after this command, galloped away from the creek, and back over the ground recently traversed when White Panther was doing the guiding.

All the Sioux took after him, just as he had supposed

they would, hoping to get back their captured chief. And still they refrained from using their guns.

For a few minutes the scout kept his lead; then, when the chief's cayuse began to fall back, he let go the horse and spurred at a headlong gallop into a small opening between two hills.

The Indians were still after him, but with Bear Paw between his knees the scout felt perfectly safe.

He rounded the farther side of one of the hills, regained the creek, splashed across and found Pawnee Bill and the Crows waiting for him.

"We're out our prisoners," said the bowie man ruefully.

"But we've saved our scalps, for now," answered the scout. "Point your caballos the other way."

"Where to?"

"The pocket. We'll see if that's as empty as the cabin."

## CHAPTER XIV.

NEWT JERSON.

All the while the pards and their Crow aides had been following the pass, and then the lead of White Panther to the cabin, they had been steadily advancing in the direction of the rocky slope where Pawnee Bill and the Crows had discovered the pocket.

Now, once across the creek, only a short gallop lay between them and the place where, earlier in the day, Jerson and his Sioux guards had been discovered.

"Was that a trap that Sioux buck led us into?" asked the bowie man.

"It was a trap, all right, but I don't believe the buck knew it at the time," answered the scout.

"Perhaps the reds had the girl with them?"

The scout shook his head.

"It don't seem reasonable to me, pard," said he. "If the reds had had the girl, and they had wanted to make the trap complete, they'd have left her in the cabin."

"That's so," returned the bowie man. "But where in Sam Hill is Miss Holcomb?"

"That's too much of a conundrum for me. Those boot-prints, overlaying the moccasin tracks, may be the key to the mystery. I'm hoping the girl has been rescued by some stray white man. Jerson is the one that now concerns us."

"Well, Jerson ought to be right ahead. There's the slope, and halfway up the slope is the pocket. You can't see it from here, as it's a sort of a sink."

"If there are any reds there watching him," observed the scout, "we'll probably hear from them on our way up the slope."

"They'll make themselves heard, all right."



The eminence in whose side the pocket was located was not of any considerable height. Pawnee Bill led the way up. Although the pards expected some concealed marksman to open fire at any moment, they were happily disappointed. Not a bullet was launched at them.

"An-pe-tu-we!" muttered Pawnee Bill. "If we get there and find an empty pocket——"

"It can't be that that sort of luck is going to keep with us," protested the scout. "This run of affairs is due to change."

They came upon the rim of the pocket almost as suddenly as they had been brought up short by the rim of the cañon. And it was certainly a pocket—no other word could describe it.

It was a depression, circular in form and measuring perhaps fifteen feet across. Its slopes, from rim to bottom, were gradual, and its depth, in the centre, must have been about a dozen feet.

What was more to the purpose, in the very centre of the pocket lay Newt Jerson. Close to him was his hobbled horse.

"Hello, thar!" shouted Jerson. "I thort ye was reds when I heerd ye comin', an' thet's why I didn't tune up. Say, hurry an' git these hyer ropes off'n me. I'm plumb paralyzed with 'em."

Leaving the Crows just inside the pocket, heads above the rim, the Bills hurried down to the guide.

"We're mighty glad to find you uninjured, Jerson," said the scout. "Where are the reds who were taking care of you?"

"They left hyer not more'n an hour ago. Some other painted varmint come erlong an' hollered to 'em. They jumped their cayuses an' made off at a rush."

"It must have been the red who got away from us in the pass, necarnis," remarked Pawnee Bill. "He's responsible for that trap at the cabin."

"I shouldn't wonder," answered the scout, busily cutting the cords that secured Jerson's hands.

As soon as his hands were free, Jerson sat up and began working his arms up and down.

"Ain't got no more feelin' in 'em than as though they was plumb wood," he grumbled. "Say," he added, as the scout began freeing his feet, "ye ain't see nothin' o' ther gal, hev ye?"

"No."

"Blast ther measly luck!" scowled Jerson. "I dunno how I'm ever goin' ter show up at Benton an' report what's happened. I'd ruther the reds would er hipped me, yes, I would. Thet Miss Holcomb was er fine gal, I'm tellin' ye, an' she was goin' ter Benton ter marry Cap'n Hollis. I know Hollis, an' I don't reckon he'll ever fergive me fer lettin' this happen."

"You couldn't help what happened," said the scout.

"I was too blame' easy, takin' some un else's word fer

it thet thar wa'n't no hosstyle reds between Custer an' Benton. It was my bizness ter look out fer thet. Oh, I ain't never goin' ter fergive myself. Seen anythin' o' ther Dutchman?"

"We found him and let him loose."

"Good enough! Whar is he?"

Pawnee Bill proceeded to explain how the baron had been rescued and had taken flight up the cañon rather than abandon his mule.

Jerson listened attentively while the bowie man brought his recital on down to the cabin, to the skirmish with the Sioux, and to the run to the pocket.

"Somebody hes shore saved thet gal!" declared Jerson.

"That's what we're hoping," returned the scout.

"Et looks ter me like er cinch. I'm a heap relieved, I kin tell ye. In a case like this hyer, oncertainity is er heap better'n not knowing anythin' at all."

"You were kept in the cave all night?"

"Thet's ther how o' it, Buffler Bill. Me, an' the gal, an' the Dutchman was herded in thet cave till sunup, then the gal an' me was took away on our hosses. I dunno whar ther gal was took, kase the party o' bucks thet had her separated from the gang thet had me. From what ye jest said, she must 'a' been took ter thet ole cabin o' mine."

"Your cabin, eh?"

"Shore, only I ain't lived in et fer a dozen y'ars. Thar used ter be plenty o' mink an' otter up an' down thet crick, but I skinned 'em out and then I moved. I been hyer in this sink in the hill all day, an' it's some hot, I'm tellin' ye, when the sun's right overhead."

"I should think so."

"Injuns never pestered me none. I reckoned they was goin' ter, howsumever."

Jerson got up and stamped his feet.

"Ye ain't got no idee how fine it feels ter hev the use o' yerself arter bein' trussed up fer a spell," he remarked. "I'm feelin' er heap like myself ag'in. If I had my guns, I'd be all right; an' if I could know thet gal was safe out o' them Injuns' clutches, I reckon I could bust loose in song."

Jerson, in order to restore circulation to his numbed feet, began running circles around the bottom of the pocket. At last he halted beside his horse, knelt down, and began removing the hobbles.

"We're plumb ter the good, this animile an' me," he observed. "I'm obleeged ter the reds fer leavin' the hoss. They went erway in sich a tarnal hurry I don't reckon they had time ter think o' takin' thier hoss with 'em. If I was ter make a wish, I'd——"

Nahkee turned away from the rim of the pocket, just then, and threw an excited look at the king of scouts.

"Pa-e-has-ka!" he called.

"What's the trouble, Nahkee?" answered the scout.



"Hat weaver, all same hat weaver squaw, run all same jack rabbit. Whoosh!"

"Hat weaver" was another name for paleface. The announcement of Nahkee was enough to carry the pards and Jerson up the slope at a run.

Looking over the rim, they saw something that caused their pulses to leap.

The baron, on his mule, was sliding across the landscape from the direction of the creek. As if this were not enough to surprise the pards and Jerson, at the baron's side rode a white woman!

"Gosh-all-Friday!" boomed Jerson, "thar's Miss Holcomb right now! Say, wouldn't this hyar put crimps in yore ha'r? She's sailin' erlong side an' side with ther Dutchman!"

"It was the baron who rescued her from the cabin!" exclaimed Pawnee Bill.

"Not a doubt of it," exulted the scout, "and, with all our figuring, we never suspected the baron!"

"That's another time he's turned one of his fancy tricks," went on the bowie man, with a laugh. "Not only did he get away from the Sioux in the cañon, but he happened to find that cabin and save Miss Holcomb."

"Like enough the reds as was guardin' Miss Holcomb was called off same as was the reds thet was guardin' me," suggested Jerson. "Anyways, I'd like ter grip ther Dutchman's hand. Why're they tearin' erlong at sich er gait?"

"Cutthroats!" whooped Crooked Foot excitedly.

"On-she-ma-da!" muttered Pawnee Bill, staring. "The Crow's right, necarnis. Look! The Sioux are just breaking out of the timber in the creek bottom. They're after the baron and the girl."

"And Yellow Horse is leading them!" cried the scout.

"We got ter do suthin'," growled Newt Jerson. "My skelp stands between them two an' capter, I kin tell ye thet."

"We'll get the two of them over here," said the scout, hoisting himself out of the pocket. "Come up, pards, and help me yell."

All three of the white men raised themselves out of the pocket and began to wave their hats and to shout. Evidently the baron and the girl heard them, for they turned their mounts in the direction of the slope and came hustling on.

"This hyer ain't no place ter stand off er lot er reds," grumbled Jerson. "Thar ain't no water, ner nothin'. The varmints kin git up above us, on top o' ther rise, an' pepper us with bullets. They kain't reach us from below, but they shore kin from above."

"This is the only holding ground anywhere around here, Jerson," returned the scout, sweeping his eyes over the surrounding country; "so it's this or nothing."

The baron and the girl reached the foot of the slope,

and began climbing. The Sioux, with fierce yells, let fly a volley at them, but the distance was too great and the bullets fell short.

A few minutes later the fugitives galloped over the rim of the pocket and the girl fell exhausted into the arms of Pawnee Bill.

## CHAPTER XV.

### HOLCOMB'S DETACHMENT.

"Hoop-a-la!" jubilated the baron. "Meppeso I don'd vas a shlick feller, eh? Look wat I dit! I found Miss Holcomb, py shinks, und I pring her to Puffalo Pill und der resdt oof der bards. Vell, vell!" went on the baron as his eyes fell on the guide, "und dere iss Cherson, oder I vas some greasers! Say, Cherson, ve vas all togedder again, *nicht wahr?* Only ve don'd vas in her hants oof der Sioux."

"We'll be in ther hands o' ther Sioux ef some fightin' ain't done purty quick," growled Jerson. "An' hyer's me, without no gun ner nothin'. Them thar reds took all my shootin' irons. All I kin do is ter fight with my bare fists."

"Here," said the scout, handing him a revolver. "I'll get along with one. If we come to close quarters, Jerson, you ought to be able to make a fair showing with that."

"Shore I kin."

At the rim of the pocket the Crows were watching the monœuvres of the Sioux with gleaming eyes. The lust for combat and scalps had been whetted in those Absaroke guides, that day. Four of them were without trophies, and each of the four had his eyes on a Sioux scalplock.

Miss Holcomb was only exhausted from her hard ride. She had not fainted. Pawnee Bill lowered her gently to the ground.

"I—I thought we were gone," she murmured. "Oh, what an ordeal I have gone through."

"It must have been hard on you, Miss Holcomb," said the bowie man, "but you're safe now."

"You are from the fort?" she asked, looking up.

"From Benton, yes. I am Pawnee Bill, and this is my pard, Buffalo Bill. Those Indians up there are friendly Crows who are with us. We came to find you."

"Buffalo Bill!"

The girl struggled to her feet and held out her hand to the dashing scout. He took the little hand chivalrously. "At your service, Miss Holcomb," said he.

"You have already done much for me, Buffalo Bill, you and your pards. I mean," and she flushed rosily, "in helping Captain Hollis as you have done you must know that you have put me in your debt."

"I suppose so," smiled the scout, "for I have talked



with your brother, and you and Hollis were the subjects of our conversation. You are well after your trying ordeal?"

"Yes, well, but awfully tired."

"My Dutch pard took you from the cabin on the creek?"

"Yes. I was taken there, early this morning, from that cave in the cañon. Two of the redskins were left to guard me and see that I did not escape. Another redskin came, about two hours ago, and called the two guards away. They left at once, after coming in and making sure that my bonds were secure. A little while after that the baron arrived. He released me, caught up my horse, put on saddle and bridle, and we started for Fort Benton. Just as we were crossing the creek we discovered that the Indians were after us. I was almost ready to give up when we saw you on this hillside, beckoning us to join you. But how is my brother? And how is Captain Hollis?"

"Both well and hearty," returned the scout, "and all that remains to make the captain supremely happy is to learn that you are safe."

"Which captain?" she asked slyly.

"Holcomb. Hollis doesn't know anything about your coming to Benton. Your brother is keeping him in the dark so as to surprise him."

"I bed you I dit a fine t'ing," spoke up the baron, "ven I vent to dot cabin on der grick. I wanted to shtop a vile, und it looked like a goot blace. Den, ven I vent insite, py shinks, dere vas Miss Holcomb, all tied oop mit ropes."

"How did you get out of that cañon, pard?" asked the scout.

"I don'd know noddin' aboutt dot. I schust rote und rote, und pumpy I vas oudt oof der ganyon und dere vas no Inchuns. Den I saw der grick und der gabin, und foundt Miss Holcomb, und dot's all aboutt it."

"Better come up hyer, pards," called Jerson, from the rim of the pocket. "Ther Sioux aire gwine ter make er surround. Some of 'em aire climbin' fer ther top o' ther rise."

Leaving the girl and the horses in the bottom of the pocket, the pards made haste to climb to the side of the guide.

The Sioux—and there were twenty-five or thirty of them—were spreading out so that they could command all sides of the pocket. Half a dozen were climbing the slope, well beyond the pocket, in order to reach the top of the uplift and be able to throw a drop fire into the basin.

"Things aire goin' ter be too hot hyer fer any use, in erbout er minit," remarked Newt Jerson grimly. "I don't keer a whoop fer myself, but I don't want thet gal ter git hurt."

The scout, swerving his eyes swiftly from point to point, figured on the chances of escape.

"When those reds get to the top of the rise," said he, "we'll mount our horses and make a dash down the hill. If the reds below get in our way, we'll ride over them."

"That's the only thing to do," agreed Pawnee Bill. "We've got to look after the girl."

"Stand to your horses, Absarokes!" the scout called to the red scouts. "We're going to get out of here, in a few minutes, and we're going a-humming."

The scout whirled to start down into the basin to explain matters to the girl. Before he could leave the rim, Pawnee Bill caught his arm.

"No use, pard," said the bowie man quietly. "Look toward the north."

The scout turned back and leveled a glance in the direction of the Missouri. What he saw caused his blood to leap.

Holcomb was coming! Holcomb and his picked detachment! And with Holcomb were Wild Bill, Nomad, and Cayuse!

The Sioux discovered the reënforcements almost as soon as the pards had seen them. At once all offensive preparations were given over. The redskins began streaking down the slope, and those at the bottom of the slope goaded their ponies at top speed in the direction of the creek.

"Whoop-ya!" howled Jerson, climbing out of the pocket and doing a war dance on the slope, "see 'em skedaddle! Oh, kain't they run? An' ain't thet jest like er lot o' cowardly skunks thet won't fight onless they outnumber ye three ter one? Whoop-ya!"

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill likewise showed themselves. As for the Crows, they swung to their ponies, and, with fierce yells, started down the slope bent on securing more scalps.

Holcomb, seeing the pards and Jerson on the slope, left Wild Bill and Nomad to head the pursuit while he rode up to the pocket.

His face was still haggard with worry as he reined in his horse.

"Cody," he asked huskily, "here's Jerson, but where's my sister?"

"Charlie, Charlie!" came a glad cry from the depths of the pocket.

That voice was enough. Holcomb flung himself from the saddle and ran down into the basin. There he gathered his sister in his arms.

"Heap fine!" exclaimed Pawnee Bill. "Eh, necarnis?"

"We've won out, by good luck and with the baron's help," answered Buffalo Bill. "Great Scott, see how those Sioux are running!"

The redskins certainly ran well, but not all of them got away. While the scout stood on the rim and watched, he



saw Wild Bill overhaul the fleeing Yellow Horse. For a minute there was a spirited struggle on horseback; and then Wild Bill, with a dexterous move, yanked the wily savage clean from his pony and onto his own horse.

Just then Little Cayuse rode up, and, with his help, the Laramie man bound the struggling chief. The scout had time for no more, for, just at that juncture, Holcomb came up out of the pocket with his sister.

"Cody, your hand!" cried Holcomb. "I reckon this is about the happiest day of my life."

The scout took the captain's palm and pressed it cordially.

"You'll have to thank our Dutch pard for your sister's rescue," said he.

"I've already done that, Cody," returned the captain, "but your Dutch pard says he couldn't have rescued Mary if he hadn't first been rescued himself. You and Pawnee Bill, he says, did that."

"The baron's side-stepping a little," laughed the scout. "I'm watching the reds. Most of them will get away, but my pard, Wild Bill, has captured Yellow Horse."

"That's the second time to-day," chipped in the bowie man.

"Have you had him in your hands before?"

"Yes, both Yellow Horse and Talk-a-heap. Pard Bill nabbed Talk-a-heap at Cheyenne Hill. That was a fine play, and the way the scout carried it off saved the day for all of us."

"I must hear about that, later."

The captain mounted his horse and rode down to take a part in what was going on.

An hour served to wind up the scrimmage, and the result was three prisoners captured—as luck would have it, Yellow Horse, Talk-a-heap, and White Panther—and a few wounded Indians who were gotten away by the rest of the Sioux.

Wild Bill and Nomad came whooping up the slope to the pocket, after seeing that the prisoners had been turned over to the troopers.

"Buffler," shouted the old trapper, "what ye got ter say fer yerself, pullin' out without ever sayin' a word ter the rest o' us? Sufferin' catermounts! We jest got in in time ter ride this way with Holcomb an' his troopers. Ef ye'd waited er spell, we'd all hev been with you, an' Pawnee, an' them Crow scouts."

"We couldn't wait, old pard," answered the scout, "there wasn't time."

"I reckon not." The trapper turned to the guide and grabbed his hand. "Newt, ye ole cimiroon," he shouted, "I ain't seen ye fer a coon's age."

"No more ye hain't," answered Jerson, "but I'm the same ole sixpence, Nick."

"Ye look et, ole rawhide. Le's go off some'r's an' talk over ole times."

And the two trappers were still talking when they were summoned to get their horses and ride for Benton with the rest of the returning party.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

The return journey to Benton was made at a leisurely pace and through the gathering dusk. Holcomb rode with the scout, at the head of the troopers. Behind them came Pawnee Bill, Miss Holcomb, and the baron. Along through the ranks of the regulars were scattered Wild Bill, Nomad, and Cayuse. In the rear were the Crows, still with only the one scalp, but with plenty of other glory. The three prisoners rode in the midst of the troopers.

"Hollis came up from the cantonment with your pards about noon," said Holcomb to the scout.

"Did he find out what had happened?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"No, we kept it from him. I feared the effect the news might have. When he saw the detachment ride away he was anxious to know what was up, but I got away without explaining."

"I reckon he'd be pretty near crazy if he learned that your sister had been captured by the Sioux."

"It would be a terrible blow to him. Of course, he may hear of it. If he does——"

The captain's voice died away into silence. What was on his own mind was also on the scout's. The post doctor had said that Hollis must be dealt with carefully for some time, and that any sudden shock to his freshly awakened reason might cause a relapse.

The news that Mary Holcomb had been captured by the hostile Sioux might have proved to be such a shock, and there was still the chance, as Holcomb had said, that Hollis would learn the dread news and the reason for the expedition that had left the fort.

The happiness of two young people depended upon the issue.

Halfway to the fort, and while the long file of troopers and other riders were forging onward through the gloom of the timber, a shadowy horseman galloped up in front of the scout and Holcomb. He drew in his heavily breathing mount with a hard pull.

"Holcomb!" he shouted. "Is that you?"

"Yes, Hollis."

It was the captain racing from the post. The news had reached him then. How had he taken it? The scout remained eagerly attentive to what followed.

"What success have you had?" demanded Hollis

"The very best, Gene," answered Holcomb. "There's no cause for worry."



"Why didn't you tell me?" demanded Hollis. "It was my right to ride with you."

"We didn't want to worry you."

"I have a right to share your worry, haven't I? But where is Mary?"

A dusky figure rode clear of the column and drew to a halt at Hollis' side.

"Gene!" called a soft voice.

"With a cry of joy Hollis leaned from his saddle and clasped his sweetheart in his arms.

What troubles had been borne and overcome since those two had last met and parted!

Hollis, unjustly accused of a terrible crime, had been able to prove his innocence; then, when the disgrace had worn upon his mind and unhinged his reason, by a miracle, almost, his reason had been restored. Now, at the last, the hostile Sioux, who had been mixed in all Hollis' troubles, had finally made a captive of Mary Holcomb—and it was the greatest and the bitterest sorrow Hollis had had to bear. Mary Holcomb, however, had been rescued, and now, at last, the lovers were together.

And in all this play of justice and injustice, of treachery and red hostility, Buffalo Bill and his pards had borne their full part. To them, more than to any one else, Mary Holcomb and Gene Hollis owed their present happiness.

"He has borne the shock, Cody," whispered Holcomb, through the gloom, "and borne it like a man. There need be no fear for Hollis in the future."

"I think not," said the scout. "This is certainly a happy ending to what might very easily have been a terrible calamity."

"You're right; and it is to you and your pards that Mary and Gene owe everything."

The scout deprecated the captain's words, but Miss Holcomb and Captain Hollis evidently thought with Holcomb.

They came to the scout, as he sat his horse beside Holcomb, and tendered him and his pards their thanks.

"There's going to be a wedding to-morrow, Gene," laughed Captain Holcomb, "and I have been trying to induce the scout and his pards to stay for it."

"They must stay!" declared Mary Holcomb. "You will, won't you, Buffalo Bill?"

The scout laughed.

"I wonder if that boat went down river this morning?"

"No, Buffalo Bill," returned Hollis, "and it is not going until to-morrow noon. We'll have the wedding in the morning, just so you and your pards will be with us."

"I wouldn't go vay mitoudt seeing dot vedding for no money vat anypody has got," piped the baron. "I t'ought I vould haf a vedding meinseluf, down dere in Arizona, aber der laty in der gase marrit der odder feller——"

A roar of laughter came from every one within hearing.

"Shtop dot!" yelled the baron. "I don'd got some re-fol-fers, aber I vill rememper who laughs ad me, und dere

vill be droubles vone oof dose tays. It vas a serious pitz-ness for der paron, gedding durned down py der laty in Arizona. Dot's all aboutd it."

There was joy at Benton that night when the detachment rode in with the rescued prisoners. Colonel Weatherby took Mary Holcomb into his own house, and his wife and daughters ministered to her comfort.

On the colonel's front porch, while the post drowsed in slumber, the colonel, Holcomb, Hollis, the scout, and his pards sat late, talking over the whirl of events that had characterized that most exciting day.

"Cody," said the colonel, when they finally bade each other good night, "you and your pards have done a good many big things in your gallant labors through the West, but you can depend upon it you never did a bigger thing than this piece of work just finished. I think that it is to you and your brave companions entirely that the Sioux troubles, which threatened dire things to this part of the country, have been settled so swiftly and so thoroughly. As for Hollis, he owes you much, and I think he knows it."

"He does," spoke up Hollis, with feeling, "and he will never forget it."

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a wedding at the post next morning, and the scout and his pards were there. They were among the first to felicitate the bride and groom after the ceremony was finished.

Later, standing on the deck of the *General Crook*, their horses and all their paraphernalia loaded, they waved good-by to a throng that had assembled on the wharf to see them off to new duties at Fort Meade.

A turn hid the wharf from view, at last, and Buffalo Bill turned away to hunt a chair on the shady side of the deck.

"Are you satisfied with that whirlwind rush that finished our work at Benton, necarnis?" inquired Pawnee Bill, following the scout.

"Entirely so, Pawnee," Buffalo Bill answered. "The happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Hollis was alone worth all it cost us."

"My opinion to a T," said Pawnee Bill.

THE END.

In "Buffalo Bill's Opium Case; or, Pawnee Bill and the Sheriff's Frame-up," you will find the king of scouts and his pards in a new field. Great operations in the opium-smuggling trade are carried on along the Mexican border, and the pards start out to break up one of the many outfits of desperate men engaged in that illicit work. The baron takes a hand in the game and makes a ten-strike in his real old-fashioned way. Out next week—No. 507.





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**CAPTURING THE COUNTERFEITERS.**

By E. N. EMERSON.

I had been appointed an officer of the Secret Service department of the government just six months previous to what I am about to relate.

Being a new hand, I was not intrusted with any important case to work up, but was detailed to ferret out the smaller ones, and, having displayed considerable ability in my profession, I was brought more particularly to the notice of the chief.

He said to me one morning after I had entered his office in answer to his request:

"There have been, and there are now, considerable amounts of spurious coins circulated in this vicinity, of various denominations. It will require ingenuity and detective ability to discover where it is made and who are the makers, and may take a long time; but, judging from what you have done, I believe you are capable of carrying it through to a successful termination."

I acknowledged my appreciation of his high opinion of me, and told him I would do the best I could.

He then gave me all the information he was possessed of on the subject, and I forthwith commenced my operations.

The first thing I found out was that a number of the employees of a certain large mill had passed considerable quantities of the spurious coins, without being detected, or even knowing the character of them.

♥ This discovery, I rightly concluded, gave me a tangible clue to work upon.

My next point was to find out how the spurious money reached the employees of the mill.

The owner was a man well known, and was of good standing in the community, and I believed he was honest and knew nothing about the affair.

As soon as I was satisfactorily convinced that the counterfeit coins obtained circulation from the mill, I called upon the owner and informed him of my business, showed him my authority, and requested his cooperation with me in detecting the real criminal or criminals.

He willingly consented and agreed to do all in his power to assist me.

So one day I called to see him, ostensibly on business, but in reality to have a good view of the clerks employed in his office.

I pride myself on my ability in reading character, and

to that I attribute the greatest part of my success as a detective.

"Where do you get your money from to pay off your hands?" I inquired.

"The bookkeeper makes out the pay roll," he replied, "and then I draw a check on the bank I deposit with for the amount."

"Who has the check cashed?—and when?" I next asked.

"The bookkeeper, and about noon on Saturdays."

"Is that the one standing at the farthest desk?" I queried.

"Yes."

"How long has he been with you?"

"About two years."

"Did you know him before that time?"

"No. He answered an advertisement I inserted in one of the daily papers; and, as he wrote a good hand and came well recommended, I engaged him and have never had any reason to regret it."

"Can you arrange it so that I can have a few minutes' conversation with him?"

"Yes. I will call him in here and request him to show you through the establishment."

As the bookkeeper entered the room I had a good look at him and there was something about him which made a very unfavorable impression on me.

We went through the mill together and I came to the conclusion that he was a rascal.

When I returned to the office I told the owner of the mill that I had discovered nothing as yet, but that I would see him again.

I waited until Saturday, and, being disguised so that I would not be recognized, I shadowed the bookkeeper to the bank and saw him draw the money for the check, and then followed him back to the mill.

I watched him for several weeks, but could discover nothing wrong, and began to think I might be on the wrong track after all. The employees did not pass any more counterfeits. I determined to try it once more, and, if not successful, to abandon that clue.

The next Saturday I again followed him, and this time he drew the money for the check all in bank notes. He then went to a place which looked like a broker's office and when he came out I saw he had some bags which had the appearance of being filled with silver.

"So, so!" I thought. "This is where you get the counterfeits from!"

I was not mistaken, for the next week there were counterfeits again put in circulation.

My next step was to find out the antecedents of the broker.

I made diligent inquiries, but no one knew anything about him further than that he had opened his office a little over a year ago, but what business he carried on could not be told. No one knew where he had come from, or any particulars whatever of his past history.

My main object was to find out the headquarters of manufacture and discover the ringleaders in the queer business, and for that reason I did not at that time arrest the bookkeeper.

I followed the broker for a week to the places he frequented, and discovered that he spent most of his evenings in a billiard saloon and from there he generally went to a noted gambling saloon.

So at the billiard saloon I also became a frequent attendant and it was not long before an intimacy sprang up between us.

Time rolled on, but still I could not discover, either by word or action, that he was engaged in the business I suspected; so I concluded I would test him by pretending to take him into my confidence.

The next night when we met I requested a private interview, stating that I wished to ask his advice about a certain transaction that I had been solicited to go into.

The interview resulted very satisfactorily, for by a great deal of tact I led him to believe that I was an agent for some professional gentlemen who were engaged in the manu-



facture of questionable money, some samples of which I showed him.

At first he was very indignant that I should broach such a subject to him; but in a short time he modified his indignation and we separated that night with the understanding that I was to meet him the next day at his office.

I called at the appointed time, and, after a lengthy conference, I agreed to furnish him with as many notes as he might want, at a very liberal discount.

"I have been trying for some considerable time," I said, "to find some one I can engage to cut a die for making silver coins, for I could dispose of a large amount in the West before they would even be suspected."

"How much do you want?" he inquired. "I might be able to supply you."

"Just as much as I can get," I answered, "provided they are good imitations."

He then spoke to his clerk for a few seconds, and, coming back to me, said:

"I can give you any quantity in the course of a few days."

After several interviews I at last got him to agree, for the purpose of trading my plates for his dies, to take me to where he manufactured the counterfeits—he having satisfied himself, as I thought, that I was one of the fraternity.

As soon as the time was fixed for us to go, I communicated with the chief and we arranged that two officers were to follow us to the place, and if, in my judgment, an arrest was advisable at that time, I was to give a signal and they were then to come to my assistance.

The afternoon agreed upon, I met my man at his office and we went from there to his stable, where he kept a pair of fast horses.

"I have set my two men at work," he remarked, after we had entered, "to make a lot of the 'queer,' so that you can see the machinery in working order and so that I can have a quantity on hand before we make a trade."

We had ridden about two hours when we came to a halt at a tavern, which had the appearance of a country inn, and was located on a byroad that was very seldom traveled.

"Here we are!" he remarked as the horses stopped; and he jumped out and entered, and I followed.

"How are you, Jake?" he said to a large, powerfully built man who sat dozing in a chair. "Everything all right?"

The man looked up, and, seeing who addressed him, merely replied:

"Yes."

We then entered a room back of the bar and from there descended into the cellar, and then down a flight of steps, which was lighted up, but unoccupied, except by ourselves.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "They should have been at work. I'll find out the reason very soon, though. You can examine the machinery and I'll go and get the men," he added, addressing me as he started up the stairs.

"Hold on!" I rejoined. "I'll go with you."

He reached the trapdoor first and as he raised it up he turned, and, with his foot, gave me a kick, which staggered me back down the stairs, at the same time saying, with an oath:

"I've got you now! I knew your game from the start and I'll see that we presently have a settlement in full."

He had already raised the trap and was in the act of passing through when I suddenly rallied, and, with a desperate spring, caught him by the foot and dragged him back into the cellar, exclaiming:

"We may as well settle in full now, my counterfeiting friend!"

At this we grappled each other, and it now became a life-and-death struggle, for I felt satisfied that if he got the better of me he would not hesitate to kill me.

He caught me by the throat and commenced to strangle me, and, in spite of all I could do, I was unable to make him relax his grip. I tried to draw my revolver, but was in such a position that I could not reach it. We rolled over and over, and I grew weaker and weaker, and thought my

time had come. I made one more desperate effort and this time I succeeded in loosening his hold, and I also managed to draw my revolver. I now made good use of the advantage I had gained, and soon had him at my mercy.

Just at this moment Jake, the landlord, came rushing down the steps with a pistol in his hand.

There was no time for me to waste now, so before he could reach me I leveled my revolver, fired, and he fell to the ground.

But while I was protecting myself from the villain, Jake, my antagonist again got me at such a disadvantage that I was unable to use my weapon, and if it had not been for my two friends, the detectives, coming to my assistance at that opportune moment, I should never have related this adventure.

They had heard the report of my pistol, had rushed into the barroom, and, being then guided by the oaths which the broker was uttering against me, had arrived just in time to save my life.

The owner of the saloon was not killed, but rather seriously wounded, and was arrested along with his friend.

I left one of my assistants on guard over the premises, while, with the other detective, I started to the nearest station house with our two prisoners.

While on our way to the police station the broker asked me if I would be kind enough to take a hair out of his eye, as it was hurting him considerably, and he was unable to do it himself on account of being handcuffed.

I stopped to oblige him and while I was looking for it he caught my finger in his mouth and before I could make him let go he had lacerated it with his teeth so badly that I was compelled to have it amputated.

The arrest of these men was a very important one for the government, for we captured a large quantity of counterfeiting tools; and on the trial the bold broker was recognized as one of the most expert counterfeiters in the country, and for whom the government detectives had been looking for a long time. He was given the extreme penalty of the law.

The owner of the mill, after his clerk's arrest, had his books examined and found that he had been robbed of a very considerable amount. The clerk also received the punishment which was justly his due.

This was my first important case and the success I met with was duly appreciated at headquarters.

## A TOUGH YARN.

Years ago it fell to my lot to be returning from India in one of Messrs. Green's fine frigate-built vessels.

My only fellow passenger was a stout, short man of about forty-five, with one of the merriest rosy faces I ever saw.

He was the traveling agent of a large Calcutta firm, and had in that capacity visited nearly every quarter of the globe.

Many wonderful stories of men and things he told us over our grog, and the rivalry that existed between himself and our captain, who was also fond of spinning yarns, led, I suspect, each to color his description rather highly, if not absolutely to romance.

But of that the reader, taking the following as an example, shall judge:

One day we had experienced heavy weather, and were in the neighborhood of cyclones, but by care and good seamanship survived every storm without the loss of a sail or spar.

Other vessels, however, had been, it seemed, less fortunate, for from time to time portions of wreck drifted by us—now some planks and cordage, or some 'light deck furniture' or cargo.

One day the dismasted hull of a large vessel was made out on the horizon.

Being well to windward we eased off the ship's head, and



ran down toward her to tender assistance to the survivors, if there were any of her crew who might be aboard.

What a melancholy spectacle! The abandoned American skipper, for so she proved to be, rolled helplessly in the waves that washed over her decks, and poured in streams through her shattered bulwarks.

At first, from the blinding spray and wind, we could discover no sign of life, but at length with the aid of the glass we could make a torn red flag fluttering from the top of the broken mainmast, and a solitary man clinging to the tangled gear which surrounded its base.

Our lifeboat was quickly manned and launched, and with great peril to themselves our brave tars succeeded in rescuing the unfortunate sufferer.

Speechless, exhausted, and half dead, he had been brought aboard and carried below to the sick bay.

It was on the evening of this occurrence that my friend, the captain, and I sat around the small stove that served to warm the cuddy.

"How is the rescued man?" asked my fellow passenger of the captain, who was mixing a strong tumbler of rum and water. "Is there any chance of his getting all right, and recovering the use of his limbs? He must be nearly starved and frozen to death. I never saw such a living skeleton in my life."

"Why," replied the skipper contemptuously, "he had not been on the wreck more than a week or thereabouts. He has taken some hot soup and is pullin' round wonderfully. He'll be about in a day or two, I'll wager."

"I should think, captain," said I, "that a week's such exposure would kill most men. Have you ever personally known a case where people have survived a longer time?"

"A longer time than a week!" exclaimed he. "Bless my life, it's positively nothing! I'll tell you what happened over this very spot, this day ten years ago."

"It's a strange story I'm going to tell you, but I can prove the truth of it by the entry in the ship's log, if necessary."

"I was at the time in question first officer of this same old craft. We were outward bound to Bombay, and heavens above, what weather we had after rounding the cape; blowing great guns for days and days together, with seas running mountains high. It's a duckpond to it to-day, calm almost, and pleasant by comparison."

"Comparisons are odious!" said my fellow passenger. "The yarn, captain, the yarn," and he fixed his eyes mischievously on the old seaman's face.

"You shall have it hot and strong," replied the other, slapping his hand on his knee, "hot and strong. Where was I?"

"Ten years ago, very day, very ship, very spot," suggested my friend, rubbing his hands, "sea mountains high, etc., come—fire away."

"Well," returned the other, now fairly on his mettle, "that description is right enough, and if I hesitate it is because I fear you will not believe me, and not because I am going to say it is not a fact."

"Ten long years ago to-day I was keeping the morning watch."

"The dawn broke red and lowering, with every sign of continuance of the boisterous weather we had already for many days experienced."

"I had gone on the forecabin to speak to the man on the lookout, and was standing looking at the white crests of the waves, when my eye was arrested by a small object a little to windward of us, and some four or five miles distant."

"I ordered the man at the helm to bear up a bit, and directed the watch on deck to stand by to launch the lifeboat, although it was fearfully rough, and I doubted if even the lifeboat could live in such a sea for five minutes, I determined, at any risk, to make an attempt to rescue a fellow creature in such an extremity."

"The jib shook ever and again as the man at the wheel pulled the good ship up in the wind. We made little or no way in consequence, but I was astonished to see at what a

pace the man on the wreck was coming toward us and what surprising good weather he seemed to be making of it."

"My word!" exclaimed the sailor on the lookout, gazing intently through his telescope: 'it's the *Flying Dutchman* in a new rig. Blest if he ain't ridin' on a porpoise or sea serpent as comfortable as possible. What do you make of it, sir?' continued he, turning to me, a look of superstitious fear overspreading his face. 'It's a queer turnout, ain't it, sir?'

"By this time the object of our curiosity was about three-quarters of a mile off, and I now could see distinctly a man riding astride on a hencoop."

"On what? A hencoop?" ejaculated my fellow passenger eagerly, half rising from his seat. "Good heavens, captain, go on!"

"I thought I should interest you," said the old man, smiling and sipping his grog; "and well I may, for it's a wonderful story."

"Well, as I was saying, there was no manner of doubt that it was a man sitting on a hencoop. As he came sweeping down the steep sides of the waves I could see him as plain as I see you now, and as he got within speaking distance I hailed: 'Hold hard! We'll lower a boat! How long mate, in the name of goodness, have you been knocking about on that craft?'

"What?" replied the man, turning a rosy, chubby face toward me. "What do you want to send a boat off for?"

"What for?" I cried, utterly astounded. "Why, to bring you on board, of course. You don't want to remain on that hencoop any longer than you can possibly help, do you?"

"Law's bless yer heart!" said he, laughing. "I've been here six weeks or thereabouts, and am as jolly as a sand boy. There's nothing to bother me. I am entirely my own master, and happy as the day is long. The best fishing that I ever had in my life," shouted he, holding up in his left hand a young dolphin about fifteen pounds weight. "Wild fowl by hundreds," he added, pointing to some dead sea birds that hung close by, "and tame ones, too, fur the matter o' that," he continued, literally convulsed with merriment; and leaning forward he stirred up with the tail of the fish three large Dorking hens, which till then I had not observed perched quietly inside the coop."

"I've fresh, new-laid aigs ev'ry mornin'. Will ye try one?" added he, throwing a couple on board.

"Well," said I, putting the eggs in the pocket of my pea-jacket. "Mark Tapley's a fool to you, at any rate. Haven't you any symptoms of scurvy among the crew? How do you get on for vegetables?"

"Seaweed is the best of greens," returned he, "and it makes a beautiful salad." And with that he flourished a great green streamer of plant over his head.

"Waving his hand in the most jovial manner, he now gave the hencoop a cant with his starboard leg, and away he swept on a great sea under our stern."

"Ease her off!" shouted I to the steersman. "In Heaven's name, ease her off." But it was too late. At that instant a mass of water struck the bluff bows of the old ship and threw her on her beam ends. The gear attached to the jib flew across the deck and knocked me senseless down the forehatch."

"When two days afterward I came to myself I was lying in my bunk with a wet towel round my head. I found I had had concussion of the brain, and they told me I had been delirious."

"But whether my mind had been wandering or not does not affect the truth of the tale I have just told you of the man on the hencoop, every detail of which is as fresh in my recollection as the day it happened. It's a rare, good yarn, however, and," said the captain, smiling at my friend, "I'll give you leave to beat it if you can."

"I have no wish to cap your story with one more marvelous," said my fellow passenger, starting up and grasping the old skipper's hand; "but you must allow me to confirm with my testimony the truth of every word you have spoken. I was the man on the hencoop."



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